



ITAICÍ 1992

The Misereor latin-american Lenten Tapestry

Theme:

The Resurrected accompanies the people of God on their journey.

**Adolfo Pérez Esquivel (Argentina)
Nobel Peace Prize 1980.**

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WHERE IS THE SPIRIT LEADING US?

My dear Confreres,

You will probably be surprised to receive the General Chapter papers written in narrative style. To tell a story, or put what is personal to some participant into a Chapter document is perhaps to fall short of the expected seriousness. And still isn't it the way that the Bible itself is written?

What is more it is not entirely a new thing; our Rule of Life is itself enriched by our Founders' life experience and what we have seen and done in our days. "We" recurs all through the text.

The aim of the Chapter at Itaici in Brazil was modest. We were asked to tell each other about our actual missionary lives. This is of course exactly what those who were interested and not too tired had always done during previous Chapters, in the evening times after we had shared our meal, and the day's labours on the main topic were over. This time it was to be the main topic.

An astonishing aim really, to settle upon thinking over our disparate, limited experiences as the principal undertaking for the huge enterprise that a General Chapter is.

The idea had taken shape following the Enlarged General Council at Arusha in Tanzania in 1989 (cf Superior General's Letter, Christmas 1989). It sprang from the conviction that listening to the "acts" of contemporary Spiritans, meditating upon them together, could make us understand where the Holy Spirit is leading our Congregation and give us a fresh missionary dynamism.

We were not going to let ourselves be carried away. We were fully aware of the limitations our Institute has to-day. Still we did want to offer our thanksgivings, convinced that what we are living through in our Congregation at the moment is at once a death and a resurrection. The Chapter put back into us afresh the joy there is in announcing Good News. Old Chapter hands were saying that it was the finest Chapter they had ever experienced.

How is an experience like that to be communicated throughout the entire Congregation?

In the first place, obviously, through the witness of Delegates returning to their Circumscriptions. They could, for example, present a talk at a meeting or - to follow the way things were done at Itaici - individual confreres could present their experiences, so as to start off a sharing to which all contribute.

Another lead would be the videocassette produced by a São Paulo unit (available in English, French and Portuguese), or a cassette done by someone who was taking part.

These papers establish the written reference for the live communication of the Chapter.

The first section reports what we heard at Itaici. It is a bird's-eye view of the "Significant Experiences" that were given a presentation, with the most striking features thrown into relief.

The second section gives an account of our reactions to those "Experiences". It is one interpretation of what we had listened to in an effort to discern the paths along which the Spirit is leading us to-day.

Then there follows a condensed version of each of the twelve "Significant Experiences".

The Chapter gave its attention - but for a shorter time - to some particular topics (research and main lines for the animation work) that had been confided to the outgoing Council by the previous General Chapter. So what is in this section, then, are not conclusions drawn from the main activity of this Chapter, even if the proposed guidelines are marked by the mind of the assembly at Itaici.

My prayer is that the Holy Spirit may give us His light to see by and His strength to put into practice the things that we are going to discover.

*The 8th December 1992,
Feast of the Immaculate Conception.*

*Pierre Schouver, C.S.Sp.,
Superior General.*

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INTRODUCTION

LISTEN TO THE "ACTS" OF THE SPIRITAN OF TODAY

We Spiritans came together at Itaici from all the corners of the earth and listened to each other telling of the wonderful things that the Lord is doing through our family. Some of the things were new, strange, even disturbing. Others had roots deep in our family history. But even here, we were told of new growth on old trees, new branches springing up from roots that we thought were dying.

"The whole group was silent as they heard Barnabas and Paul report on all the wonders and miracles that God had done through them" (Ac 15:12). As at Jerusalem, we tried to look at the full picture; the disappointments, the misunderstandings, even within our own family. And again as at Jerusalem, we decided to use our lived experience, with all its joys and sorrows, as the starting point in the search for the paths down which the Spirit might be calling us.

The heart of the Chapter was the presentation of the twelve "significant experiences", a summary of which you can read further on in this document. They acted as a point of departure where delegates could recognise their own experiences and those of their confreres throughout the world. But there were many other highly significant factors present. The location of the Chapter in Brazil, the greatly increased representation from the southern hemisphere, both bore witness to the rapid growth of our Congregation in the south. The presence also of Spiritan Associates at the General Chapter for the first time reminded us of an exciting new development in our family, especially in some of the older

jurisdictions. Moreover, the five hundredth anniversary of the voyage of Columbus and the different ways in which the significance of that event were being interpreted, was never far from our minds. The talk given to us by Cardinal Arns - the struggle of his people against oppressive poverty, his own personal courage in his identification with them and, above all, the great act of faith, joy and optimism with which he finished - this was indeed a memorable and significant experience for us all.

Perhaps this account will not ring with the same note of confidence and certainty as did the papers from former Chapters. It is more hesitant, more tentative, because several of the new paths are only just coming into view. But if we can share some of the joy, some of the optimism that gradually took hold of us at Itaici, old Provinces and Districts as well as new, as we listened to each other with sharpened hearing, then we will be well satisfied. "The community read it and were delighted with the encouragement it gave them" (Ac 15:31).

PART I

WHAT DID WE HEAR AT ITAICI?

1 We heard much about listening and respect

A Spiritan and his friend in Trinidad were walking through the area where Black Power demonstrations had taken place, determined to listen to the grievances of the people. "How can we help you?" They were rather disappointed by the reply in its banal simplicity; "Make us a basket-ball pitch!" But they went ahead as they had resolved and built the pitch and tried to answer, as best they could, to the other needs they were told about in the same way. Out of this determination to listen at all costs came the SERVOL project and its philosophy of "respectful intervention" answering real needs, not the needs we suppose people to have or, even worse, that we would like people to have.

In the periphery of São Paulo, we saw a church where people listen to each other for hours on end with great respect, with no thought of who this is or where he or she comes from. Everybody's opinion is important and must be listened to. Even the priests listened. And then we shared a pilgrimage with 120,000 of these same people to the shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida. Before we came to Brazil, we would perhaps have been inclined to laugh at this popular religion, but now we felt somehow disturbed by it as we tried to understand the strange rites and gestures. "The people evangelise us", we had been told by those working amongst them. Could this be what they meant?

We were told how the Hindus can shake us to the core with some of their probing answers to our friendly approaches. Young people in Manchester can be deeply upsetting in their reactions to the church and shake our self-confidence and long-held presumptions. But only by listening carefully and being challenged by the replies we get to our questions, will we be able to move closer to those we seek to know and love. It is often a good thing to be shocked.

2 We heard what inculturation means from those who live it

The Gospel is presented to the Baka pygmies of Cameroon as something to be absorbed into their oral tradition. It is not just received; it is celebrated in song and dance. It is set into the model of the Baka stories and the whole of Mark's Gospel is learnt by heart.

To get the Gospel through to young people in England, there is a complex youth-culture that has to be studied and a whole process of respectful inculturation that needs to be undergone. The demands on our brothers involved in this apostolate are every bit as stringent as if they were travelling to the other side of the globe. Some say it is like entering a sixth continent. A new language has to be learnt, strange symbols, customs and traditions. Use a less sensitive approach and they will vanish, just as the pygmies vanish into the forest, leaving the bewildered missionary standing alone with his message unheard.

Many Mauritians are convinced that Jacques Laval was a Mauritian. He made a point of always sitting with his door wide open to the street so that people could come and go as they wished and feel perfectly at home and welcomed. Our brothers in Pakistan try to share the life-style of the people as much as they can. This means not just adopting the dress,

customs and symbols, but also sharing the alienation, ridicule and disregard which is the daily lot of those minorities who are almost lost in a sea of Islamic culture.

3 We were told of Spiritans engaged in dialogue in many different forms

In ecumenical dialogue. At the end of the Requiem Mass for Fr Sammy Moore, an Irish confrere from Ethiopia blessed the coffin according to the liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. This simple gesture was a living illustration of what he had told us that morning. We had often heard before of ecumenical cooperation in works of development, famine relief, medical aid, but a joint project of first evangelisation with Orthodox Christians? Surely none of our General Chapters had heard anything like this before.

In inter-faith dialogue. The Spiritans in Mauritius have come to realise that the Church there cannot just tolerate or co-exist beside the great Hindu world which makes up such a significant part of the population. A center has been set up on the island at Pont-Praslin to encourage dialogue and to foster deeper relationships at all levels.

With youth. Perhaps we can learn from the young. We were told of the inter-faith dialogue that takes place every day among the unwitting children of Auteuil who come from so many religious traditions. Thank God, they are too young to be "culturally arrogant"; they simply want to know everything about their friends and to enjoy the celebration of each other's religious festivals.

In patience. We were reminded that "dialogue" is a new word in the Catholic Church and its practice is far from widespread. It must not just become another cliché, especially not for Spiritans with their pioneering charism. There are some

places where we can only pray for dialogue in God's good time. For the moment, those in Pakistan, as in other countries with Moslem majorities, have to be content with a silent dialogue of witness and respect for the Moslem world that surrounds them.

Within the Church. Dialogue with the local church, a strong tradition in our Congregation, is a distinctive feature of several of the experiences presented. In general, the relationships are very good and fruitful.

We were also told of painful divisions and misunderstandings in the Church in different parts of the world, and the ministry of healing and bridge-building that some Spiritans are involved in today. We heard with pride of their efforts to bring about dialogue, understanding and forgiveness.

The ecumenical evangelisation that we practice in Ethiopia, which could have far-reaching implications for the Church, has been upsetting for some, while others have warmly welcomed it as a bold ecumenical outreach. Our confreres on the spot and the General Council have been patiently trying to build bridges and create understanding for this situation.

4 We saw justice and peace as a constitutive part of evangelisation

We thank God that identification with the people we serve is nothing new in the Congregation. The stories we heard at Itaici show that this sharing the lot of people, in good times and bad, is still the ideal of Spiritans throughout the world.

The present commitments of some of our confreres represent a real struggle as they question deep-rooted mentalities, structures, vested interests. We could cite many examples but

perhaps nowhere is this more true than in Haiti. For many years, this identification had to be outside the country among the scattered Haitians in exile. In 1986, the Spiritans were allowed to return. We heard of the social and political activity that our brothers felt obliged to undertake in view of the desperate circumstances in which the people found themselves. They discerned that their commitment to the poor left them no possible alternative.

In some places, our confreres feel they have to be the voice of the voiceless. In North America, the whole Spiritan region gave what weight and publicity it could to the plight of the Haitian refugees. In Africa, where the number of people driven from their homes seems to grow by the hour, many Spiritans are doing what they can to bring not only food and clothing but also dignity and hope to these uprooted people. From Sierra Leone to Kenya, from Malawi to Ethiopia, confreres are involved in this most tragic apostolate.

In this year when we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the start of the conquest of the Americas, the experience of the Spiritan group in Mexico among the Huastecos, as well as the conference we heard from Archbishop Luciano, drew our attention to the great injustice done to the Indians since 1492. Not only were they decimated, but their culture was ignored or despised, even inside our own Church, to the extent that they took refuge in silence. The commitment of the Spiritans and the welcome we have extended to some to join our Congregation (two are in the Novitiate, five others are preparing for it), is a striking sign to society and the Church, a sign of recognition of their dignity and the riches of their culture. Our hope is that our efforts will help these Indians to break out of their silence and bring the Good News to their own people.

Elsewhere, as in Brazil and Guyana, Spiritans are reminding people they have a voice of their own, that God has given great power and courage to the human spirit where it acts "in the cause of righteousness". People from the periphery of São Paulo presented a mime to us which showed, how, inspired by the Word of God, they organised themselves politically to obtain a water supply from a reluctant local authority. Basic Christian Communities were portrayed as often being built by simple people seeking to solve mundane problems. This would lead them on to reflect on these problems in the light of the Christian gospel. The priest in the mime was depicted as the one who listens, who unifies and brings hope, who encourages and helps people to appreciate themselves and their potential. He was the one in their midst who symbolized the liberating and enabling power of the Gospel and the Eucharist.

At times, however, our solidarity with the suffering person can only be that of Mary at the foot of the cross, a loving, supporting presence of powerlessness. Some of us were shown a group of abandoned babies, all infected with AIDS, their life expectancy a mere seven years. We were taken to a school where Holy Rosary Sisters are involved in an AIDS awareness programme. We finished the day in another community with adults who had only a short time to live. In São Paulo, Cologne, East Africa and many other places, Spiritans are involved in this witness of solidarity with those who must be the most marginalised people of all.

5 We were shown community in the context of Spiritan mission today

There were many testimonies to the crucial role played by the support of one's brothers in difficult situations ... sharing community discernment and, perhaps most of all, forgiveness. The Pakistan project would be simply impossible without this.

"Each member of the community is valued for what he is, not for what he does". Each is encouraged to use his talents for the good of all. One wonders if the fact that a good number of the community are Brothers rather than priests has led the group to stress and appreciate, more than elsewhere, the innate supportive role and duty of a Spiritan community. Can they give us a new vision of community life that can be obscured when many are involved in a rather personal priestly ministry?

The Spiritan following a new and sometimes lonely path with the Hindus in Mauritius, the alcoholics in London, the poor children of Port-of-Spain, will go forward with greater confidence when he experiences the support and prayers of his confreres throughout his circumscription.

It is not just the pioneering confreres who have a right to the support of the community. The Provinces, and especially the older ones, have a majority who are retired or sick, others caring for these men, others again like bursars, missionary animators, appeals organisers. Old age, sickness, administrative work are equally unavoidable but we should recognise them as an integral part of the mission of the Congregation and give them equal support.

Community and solidarity at the level of the Congregation was a recurring theme, and particularly striking was the feeling of common missionary concern and cooperation between the north and the south, and a deeper appreciation of each other's problems. This rose especially from the presentation by the East African Province. We were shown a new branch of our family that has great potential and promise for the future, many vocations, much vitality. We heard of the projected union between the Province and the District of Kilimanjaro, which could be an example for other jurisdictions in similar circumstances.

There are also very pressing problems that were described by other young Provinces and Foundations in the subsequent discussions. We heard pleas from new Foundations for help to become economically self-sufficient. More than one told of having to refuse vocations because there are no formators or facilities. Several times, we were reminded of the imbalance in the ratio of formators to students in the Spiritan world. Pressing invitations to come and help were heard almost daily in the aula.

On the feastday of our brother, Jacques Laval, we were told of the great confidence that he always had in the laity. He called the poor to mission and gave them a whole range of ministries. Throughout the Chapter, we found ourselves talking so much about the thousands of lay people with whom we work. And with us, in the aula, at prayer, at table, in the bar, were Laila and Dermot, the first Spiritan Associates ever to take part in a General Chapter. We saw them as a pledge for the future and a gift from God. We heard tell of many like them who are joining our family throughout the world, and we counted ourselves blessed.

6 We heard of renewal in mission in the older parts of the Congregation

If some of our confreres are becoming engaged in completely new projects, a number of our older works are showing a new vitality and even transformation. The presentation from the English Province concentrated on two areas of mission that are being undertaken despite the small numbers and pressing demands from elsewhere. We heard of a project amongst the poor in north London and a youth apostolate that is seen as a great need among the unevangelised young people of today. We were told how much they are supported by the older confreres and how this support is greatly appreciated. It brings new life and hope, not

just to the few who are directly involved, but to all those who belong to the Spiritan family in that country.

A clear example of this renewal is the project presented to us by Guyana. The parish of St Laurent du Maroni was a lively church, but rather centered on itself. A large number of baptised people did not enter into the life of the parish. Some quite large groups - Amerindians, Afroamericans, various immigrants and refugees - took no part in parochial events. How often is this the case in parishes where Spiritans are working? The "New Image of Parish" is an example of what can be done in situations like this; a network of small, intimate ecclesial communities which try to reflect the gospel values. It is no easy answer, but after eight years, the project at St Laurent shows encouraging signs of growth. A genuine missionary concern for those outside the parish family has brought about a new solidarity among the parishioners. It was felt that this vivid presentation could be an inspiration to the large number of Spiritans who are in Parish ministry throughout the world.

A somewhat different approach has been taken by some confreres working in Brazil. They start from the "base", that is to say, the reality of what the poor people are living each day. The Basic Christian Communities of Brazil will differ widely from those of St Laurent, indicating, perhaps, a different model of Church adapted for very different circumstances.

7 We heard a call for an extension of our missionary activity in the Asiatic world

The presentations from Pakistan and Mauritius and the reports from the Indian Ocean Foundation drew our attention to the enormous missionary task in Asia and the relatively small response of our Congregation so far to the needs of the people in that vast area.

Asia contains the majority of the world's poor and its non-Christians and it is the home of all the great world religions. As yet the message of the Gospel has scarcely found a home there. These facts cannot simply be overlooked by an international missionary congregation.

Hence the plea that the Congregation should consider another initiative in Asia. The ultimate aim of this initiative would be to contribute to making the Asian Church more missionary and self-evangelising.

8 We recognised the role of education in the experiences presented

Education is a Spiritan charism that is as old as the Congregation itself. In several Provinces there are Spiritan schools and in one, a university. Education is still an important vehicle of evangelisation in many of the missions where Spiritans work.

The Duquesne meeting of Spiritan Educators in 1991 not only drew together representatives from formal education, but also, to the surprise of many, from a wide variety of the more informal kinds of education. We heard much of the latter at Itaici, especially works like Auteuil and SERVOL, aimed at helping the poor to acquire skills that will enable them to break out of the cycle of poverty.

The title of the video we saw on Auteuil was "An Equal Opportunity" (*à chance égale*). It would seem to be a very apt motto for the whole of Spiritan education.

PART II

WHAT WAS OUR REACTION TO THESE EXPERIENCES?

9 "Where we are weak, there we are strong"

In no way did the Chapter set out to find definitive solutions to all the problems that face the Congregation today. By fixing our attention on the reality of our missionary life as lived today, we discovered many things of which we were unaware, which will give us renewed hope and new orientations.

The inductive method followed and the varied experiences considered, made us aware that many new issues are arising from contemporary missionary approaches and that our older works and institutions are capable, under the influence of the Spirit, of giving birth to a new missionary dynamism. The Congregation is responding creatively to the contemporary needs of evangelisation (SRL 2) and the Spirit of the risen Christ is animating and guiding our apostolic vision (SRL 8).

However, the experiences presented provoked a two-fold reaction. There was admiration at the extent of the achievement, but at the same time, there was a sense of unease at the vulnerability of some of these projects.

Gradually, the faith-perspective of St Paul and Francis Libermann began to take hold: "For it is when I am weak that I am strong" (2 Co 12:10). The trust of our contemporary Spiritans seemed to echo that of our ancestors in the faith - Laval, Brottier, Shanahan. Further back stood des Places, who refused to stop believing in the young men of his time, and Libermann, whose personal life illustrated one of the main threads of today's missionary spirituality ... Waiting for God.

The reaction of the delegates as the message of the experiences began to sink in was itself an added "significant experience" and one that we must now try to record. Despite the different situations in which we are working, we were able to identify with so much of what was presented by the twelve, and with the reaction of others to these presentations. The fact that the whole assembly was affected, transformed these limited and particular testimonies into something of far wider value and significance.

SO WHERE IS THE SPIRIT LEADING US...?

10 We are being led along the path of a greater openness to others

It was very striking that in nearly all of the presentations, it was not the missionary but rather the people who listened to him who ultimately dictated the form of our missionary undertakings.

11 It seems that mission today consists far more in listening than in talking

"Listening" was one of the key words at this Chapter. In this sense, the missionary should reflect the image of God that is presented in Exodus: "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying for help on account of their taskmasters" (Ex 3:7).

We must listen to the poor because they help to show God to us. There is an aspect of the richness of God to be discovered in every person, in every culture.

How can we be sure that our listening is genuine? Do we really know how to recognise and appreciate the goodness

and beauty in others? Are we capable of listening to the cries of those we meet, especially when those cries are muffled by the cloak of silence that society wraps around them?

To evaluate our listening, we can look for some leads in what we heard at Itaiçi.

By letting go of our "cultural arrogance". Maybe this phrase seems rather strong and does less than justice to the marvelous example of many of our confreres in the past who were so good at adapting to the culture of their people. It is intended rather as a warning, because this arrogance can nestle insidiously in the cracks between our theories and our actions, without our being aware of it. It can lie behind our unwillingness to admit that we are all culturally conditioned.

By letting our convictions and our way of doing things be brought into question. It is relatively easy for us to confess that we are sinners; it is far more difficult to let others enumerate our sins one by one. In the same way, we are ready to reflect critically on what we have done, but we get very annoyed when others do it for us.

By learning how to let ourselves be evangelised. Today, we are realising more and more that although God has told us everything through Jesus Christ, there is much of the message that we still do not understand. In meeting others, we learn more about how to live and express our beliefs. "Be converted, and believe in the Good News" (Ac 14: 15). The missionary believes that the Holy Spirit is present long before he himself arrives in a place. Certainly, he is the herald of the Good News, but the people he meets, in their turn, reveal to him aspects of the Gospel he carries that he had not fully appreciated before. But this realisation cannot take place without a permanent conversion on the part of the missionary.

12 From listening to our confreres, mission today presumes a willingness to let the gospel take on different forms wherever we are sent.

In discussing the Ethiopian experience, we wondered why the Church there had stood firm against the advance of Islam in the early centuries, while the rest of North Africa had succumbed. One reason could be that whereas in Ethiopia the Christian faith was deeply inculturated, it did not penetrate the cultures of the peoples along the rest of the North African coast. In any case, surely nobody can announce the Good News without being concerned, at the same time, that it be fully accepted into the culture of those who are listening.

The Chapter did not attempt to define "inculturation", it recognised, in several of the experiences proposed to it, some important initiatives in this area. For example, the Spiritan work with the Baka pygmies in East Cameroon is a pastoral approach that is very sensitive to the positive values of their traditional religion. While trying to accompany them in the social revolution that they are going through, the Spiritans take great care to help them preserve their cultural roots. It is not that they are trying to persuade the people into some sort of "cultural reserve"; the pygmies cannot live as though the neighbouring Bantus and others do not exist. We live in a world where cultures meet and interact with each other. The myth of some sort of cultural paradise, sealed off from the rest of the world, is the stuff of story books.

Inculturation implies a respectful approach to the culture of others and anthropology is an essential tool for a proper understanding of this culture. So it must play an important part in the preparation of a future missionary. He should learn to be a patient, humble and respectful person, with great sensitivity and delicacy of touch.

Inculturation that is directed by the expatriate will always have its limits. It will be, of its essence, an intervention from outside. This shows, in a certain way, the "otherness" of the Word of God, which "cuts like a double-edged sword" the culture of both the announcer and the hearer. We must be ready always to recognise and rejoice in the constant newness that the Spirit brings forth where ever he is at work. The missionary brings the seed of the Gospel; he must discreetly withdraw into the background so that those who have welcomed the Word can live and celebrate it in their own way.

Finally, from the presentations we recognise that the adoption of these attitudes is not a task for the missionary world alone. It is an imperative for all churches, including those of the north. It is a work that is never finished because it takes place in an ever-changing world.

13 Listening to our brothers describing their life and work, we realised how much the modern missionary can expect to be questioned

Mission is dialogue, a word that is so full of meaning and implications for action and attitudes. It breaks down barriers of ignorance, indifference, self-satisfaction and egoism. Our confreres, who are led along this path by the Holy Spirit, can no longer live as if Hinduism, Islam, African religions and other forms of Christianity do not exist or are irrelevant to their personal vocation. And being swept along by the dynamism of this dialogue, they will also want to apply it within our own Church.

As mentioned above, the Chapter reflected on three areas of dialogue: ecumenical dialogue, inter-faith dialogue, and dialogue within the Church itself.

Ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue suppose a concept of mission as sharing of faith rather than as strategy for the conquest or conversion of the other person. In the Gamu Gofa experience of Ethiopia, we come face to face with the fact of the discordant and antagonistic versions of Christianity that are often presented in a given area by missionaries. Our confreres there have undertaken also a joint programme of first evangelisation, and have made a deep study of orthodox theology and spirituality.

What is possible with the Orthodox Church would obviously be more difficult with the major Reformed Churches and working with the "Sects" has proved impossible so far for our confreres. We pray that we will not always have to preach a discordant Christianity. Meanwhile, we should avoid giving the impression that "dialogue" for us is just a provisional line of approach until better times come along. For where there exists the possibility of conversions, people tend to talk of mission as an explicit announcement of Jesus Christ: where that possibility is absent, one hears more of "dialogue". There is surely a certain lack of honesty here.

Dialogue presumes an atmosphere of complete honesty. To say that the other person is welcome does not mean that we ignore the reservations that we might have about his position. For example, dialogue with Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia cannot cloak the fact that at times, this Church was looked upon as "imperialist". At the same time, we must have the courage to admit that our own Church has not always avoided the same temptation.

The word "dialogue" is frequently used by the Church, usually in the context of external relationships. Should it not also find its place internally and be applied to the disagreements that inevitably arise from time to time within the family of the Church? Cardinal Arns spoke to us of some of

the stresses within the contemporary Church and ended with a declaration of his unshakable faith in the action of the Spirit within the Church. For if we believe that the Spirit is always there before us on the paths of mission, we hold with equal conviction that He is also constantly at work in the very heart of our ecclesial family.

Nevertheless, the missionary is still left with unresolved questions that can be of vital importance to his work. For instance, is it right to ask that the Church accept legitimate differences within herself? Does evangelisation always have to mean, in all circumstances, the creation of Roman Catholic communities? Does the main emphasis in mission always have to be on the importing of "sound doctrine"? Can it not also entail the duty of discovering the work of the Spirit in every culture? For we believe that He permeates the history, the religion, the total life-experience of all peoples and of all individuals. This does not mean that we should be apologetic about the Good News; but it does dictate that we should show the greatest respect for the presence of God's Spirit in the whole of his on-going creation.

14 We are being led along the paths of liberation

Since the beginning, the service of the poor has been one of the basic commitments of our Congregation and nearly all the significant experiences take root in this same concern. Our work with ethnic minorities, with the marginalised in the great cities, with the youth that an uncaring society leaves to its own devices; none of this is new for those who follow Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann. It is seen rather as a basic obligation and is engraved in our Rule of Life.

What was proposed to us at Itaici seemed to point in the direction of a new type of response to our original vocation. Our preferential option for the poor springs from a vision of

God the Liberator: "A branch will grow from the stock of Jesse ... with justice he will judge the poor and defend the humble in the land with equity" (Is 11:1-4).

So our mission cannot be reduced to the transmission of a doctrine, of a law, a ritual, of structures. It is above all a commitment, in the name of Jesus Christ, to the total liberation of all people from all those things that enslave them. The Gospel is not just a message; it is a project of love aimed at transforming the world, to struggle for justice and peace.

In some instances, we have to become the voice of those unable to speak for themselves, although it should only be a temporary solution until they find their own voice and with it discover their dignity.

How far should we go? Where there are situations crying out for justice, what is the worth of declarations if we do not ourselves join the people in their struggle? Does not the experience of our confreres in Angola, Haiti and elsewhere challenge us to think hard in such circumstances about the relationship between Christian morality and politics? Where does our duty lie?

Another area where Spiritans are engaged in the struggle for liberation, is that of education. Several striking examples were placed before the delegates of different models that today's mission would seem to demand.

The importance of a literacy programme is crucial if the poor are to stand up and believe in themselves. In the upbringing of marginalised young people, deprived of family support, education opens the door to a decent human life, while giving a glimpse of the Lord's special love for the disadvantaged.

Young people in developed countries have their own culture, where Christian educators enter only with great difficulty and self-denial. There they often find emptiness, hunger, insecurity alongside great generosity.

In second and third level education, the harvest is great. The Spiritan who enters this world will only find a hearing for the Word of God and the world-view that it brings if he is prepared to suffer some rejection. There is a price to be paid if future leaders are to value faith and justice, if they are to be honest and to have respect for those who seemingly do not count.

15 The Spirit is leading us on the road to death and resurrection

Everything points to the fact that mission today calls for a radical commitment. To meet others in such a way that they can live the gospel in their own fashion, to dialogue in all honesty, we have to forget ourselves, our own little world, and even the familiar and comforting vision that we hold of our Church. The Lord is asking us to die to ourselves, to follow the same path of kenosis that he took: "He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross" (Ph 2: 6-9).

Accepting the loss of himself in placing this total confidence in others, the missionary, like Paul, will also experience the joy of the glory of the risen Christ. This glory reveals itself in the evidence of God's action in the lives of these others and in the new fruits that spring from their creative personal contact with the gospel.

Committing our lives to respect for and recognition of others, to sharing and reconciliation, will certainly bring us into

conflict with the terrible forces of rejection and hate that seem to be flooding our world. It is one of the inevitable consequences of a commitment to liberation that we will be pushed down the road to death - sometimes in a very real sense, more likely in the sense of losing our peace and security, of being rejected by those whose stance we adopt. At the heart of such a sacrifice is the irresistible power of the resurrection, which is the strength of the love of God.

16 The Spirit guides us along the path of faith

At a time when faith seems to be weakening throughout the world, we were struck at the Chapter by the strength of faith which has led confreres to consecrate their lives to the needs of others, to the service of the poor, to the struggle for justice and peace. This is where they find joy and fulfilment. Their constant going out towards others becomes their own pilgrimage towards God.

The mandate for today's missionary, which is to testify by his life to the limitless love of God in a world full of division and misery, is already beyond his own weak powers. The faith that inspires our many practical commitments in the struggle for justice and for peace is giving the world examples that excite emulation.

In this way, the seemingly small undertakings of Spiritans outside their own cultures and the world of the rich, have a value and significance far greater than any immediate results achieved locally. They represent great and encouraging signs to a world that, in a real sense, is waiting and looking for them, a world that is sick of evil and selfishness.

17 The renewal of the Church as Spiritan mission

If several of the significant experiences invited us to look beyond the well trodden paths, the normal areas where the Congregation and the Church are present, others pointed to a renewal of older works. Such were the parish of St Laurent in Guyana, the renewal of Auteuil, the new initiatives undertaken in England. The Spirit is not active just at the cutting-edge: it is also at work in the heart of the Church where communities are already built and where history has led our Congregation.

Many pointed out that a missionary project is fully justified in the Province "of origin" and can itself often demand a considerable degree of inculturation. Both old and younger jurisdictions take it for granted that they can no longer ignore these missionary situations at home.

We were made conscious at the Chapter of the links between the prophetic experiments and the more traditional works in our Congregation. Behind every prophet there are many others who are making his prophecy possible. These new experiences are often unstructured and their continuity is not always assured. For lasting efficacy, will we not have to look further into the future and foresee some sort of more solid organization?

18 The Spirit invites us to take the road of communion and solidarity

We were impressed by the importance attached to community life by some of the new engagements. The Chapter itself produced an impressive Spirit of fraternity from a very disparate group of confreres from all over the world.

We identified an essential element for the present and future wellbeing of our Congregation - that of communion and

solidarity. In the fragmented world of today, with its north - south divide, will we Spiritans be able to rise to the challenge of showing that a relationship of fraternity is a real possibility?

As regards the development of the younger jurisdictions, much would seem to depend on the degree of support and sharing they receive from the longer-established parts of the Congregation, particularly in the area of finance and personnel. And the pressure to send their men *ad extra* should not be such that they are unable to build a strong base at home and establish their own identity in the local church. In short, everything should be done to help the new parts of the Congregation to make their own unique contribution to the missionary history of our family.

The older Provinces need support and sympathy in their turn as they live by the same faith as Abraham. By starting new missionary projects at home, they are not running away from reality but putting all their trust in the Lord, as Abraham did. And the older confreres have a role to play here; not only one of prayer, but also of recalling the risks that they were prepared to take in years long gone by, in situations then difficult or apparently beyond hope.

Those who suffer most, Spiritans who are old or ill, may be at the height of their missionary influence. Energy goes out from them. Like their active confreres what they hold in their hearts and set their sights upon is the proclamation of the Gospel. Therefore they always remain important contributors to the family dialogue and discernment. They may be tempted to turn in on themselves, but the Spirit of Jesus will show them how to love until the end.

Our mission is seen more and more as closely involving lay people in the many areas of evangelisation. They are not to be looked upon as clients of a clerical church; they have

their own distinctive contribution to make to its life and its renewal.

In the past twenty years, many lay people have shown a special interest in the Congregation and in different ways have worked and prayed alongside us. Some seek an on-going loose association, others a closer connection for a limited period, others again a more permanent commitment to the life and works of the Congregation.

This is a new development for our family, and the various juridical, human and spiritual problems that arise must be looked on as a challenge to be welcomed with hope and confidence. The Congregation welcomes this gift with great joy, and sees it as an opportunity to develop its missionary charism in many unexpected ways.

To finish, let us quote from the reaction to the Chapter of the oldest delegate present:

"Like Simeon, I want to give thanks to God. The Holy Spirit pushed us forward, he swept away the doubts and hesitations that we had about these new experiences. Spiritan vocations are coming ... what joy to see new generations coming along. The Congregation is alive, very much alive. Let us bless the Lord!"

PART III

THE SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES

19 The starting points of our reflections

Twelve "Significant Experiences" were presented during the General Chapter. What follows is an outline of each of them. In most cases it remains as it was formulated by the confrere(s) who made the presentation.

No written account does justice to a live performance: it is always going to take away from the wholeness. The pages that follow cannot communicate to you the richness of what the Delegates took part in at the Chapter, much less every last detail of what the men on the spot are experiencing in their mission. What these summaries do convey however, are the starting points of the discussions and the origins of the first two parts of this Report.

20 PONT-PRASLIN (MAURITIUS)

Dialogue: one way of mission

The human context

Mauritius is a mosaic of peoples, cultures and religions. Its population of 584,000 is 32% Christian, 50.6% Hindu and 16.3% Muslim. A dozen languages are spoken, including Creole.

The portion of the population which is of Indian background was brought into the island to provide a labouring force when slavery was abolished. It enjoys the main economic power, while that of business is in Muslim hands. Several political systems have been tried: "Anglo-Indian democracy", "Communalism", "Parliamentary democracy". There has been considerable development on the island (sugar, tourism) and, relatively speaking, there has been an absence of social turmoil. An effort has been made to maintain a balance between races, religions and cultures. Since independence the church has been looking for new starting-points.

A lengthy obstacle race

Fr Laval devoted himself to the world of the poor freedmen and saw to their improvement and to the enhancement of the Creole's reputation. Gradually the church in Mauritius became identified with the world of the Euro-Creoles and enjoyed considerable prestige because of its works of education (Holy Spirit College).

By the time of Fr Laval's death in 1864 the Indians were already in the majority. The "Indian Mission" begun by the Jesuits had experienced success and failure. IMCA (the Indo-Maurician Catholic Association) enjoyed a fair measure of success in the world of the Tamils. Spiritans, who were three

quarters of all the clergy, took little interest in the Indian segment of the population. Mgr Shanahan had sounded the alarm and had attempted to start an outreach to them. During the decade of the '70's the church was involved in new initiatives in the domain of education.

Obstacles: The priests were fully taken up by their pastoral work among Catholics. As far as the missionary dimension was concerned, Euro-Creole circles were not much interested in approaches to others. Many Creoles saw the Church as something belonging to them, who were excluded from political and economic life. Others were looked on as a threat: the Muslims were "fanatics", the Indians too "overbearing". On top of all this, there was a long tradition of demonising the religion of others and of prejudice. The Church was looked on as a source of political power. Christian and Creole were interchangeable terms.

Pont-Praslin: aims and results

Four convictions and two objectives arose out of the assessment of the various efforts at new approaches.

Convictions

* In Mauritius, mission should be understood as dialogue. This conviction arose out of the logic of circumstances. Even though it has trouble establishing itself among Christians, dialogue is a deeply Christian approach.

* In order to have dialogue we must be ready to immerse ourselves in the milieu of the other person. It also means one must be ready to examine critically one's own faith. It is an exercise in patience and humility.

* It is impossible to open up new missionary approaches and at the same time be responsible for a large parish.

* But a mission of this kind cannot be envisaged without reference to a Christian community.

The objectives

* To create the conditions for an authentic interreligious dialogue.

* To open up the Christian community to dialogue with others.

In setting up the Pont-Praslin Reception Center we were driven by the desire to bring rapidly together Christians, Hindus and Muslims of good will in order to bring about better mutual understanding. We soon had to scale down our expectations. Very few Christians were ready for such an experiment and our Hindu and Muslim friends were very hesitant.

Thus was born the idea of offering introductory sessions on the various religions and cultures of Mauritius.

Organisation of the sessions

In 1987 we began the first series of these sessions at the rate of two weekends per month, with nineteen participants. It proved to be a bit too demanding. Some Christians found themselves disturbed in their faith.

This experience led us in the following year to put together two kinds of timetable:

- a. A preliminary course of ten weekends spread out over the whole year which was intended to give an

overview of the religious scene in Mauritius.

b. A second programme aimed more specifically at Christians which, over nine weekends dealt with certain key elements of our faith.

In both courses the method employed was to present the contribution of those who are "Christians in another mode". These people made a presentation of their faith. This was followed by group activities. In 1989 we added a third programme which dealt with popular religion and the practice of magic.

The beginning of a lay team

In 1988, three or four people offered their services to help us with the running of the Center. At the end of 1989 seven people made the decision to go further in the service of the mission understood as a dialogue with those "believers in another mode." They came together every fortnight for basic Bible study and to share their various experiences of meeting the others.

The team was expanded in 1991. Today it comprises thirty members. In 1991 also, the original group and three other people expressed a wish to consecrate themselves more definitively to the service of the mission and felt the need for a closer union between themselves, the better to perform their mission. They put their plan before the Cardinal and the Council of Priests. They made overtures to the Spiritans with a view to an eventual association with our Society.

At the moment, the group is in the process of drawing up its rule of life which it will then put before the Spiritan council.

"Through the woods a road is a-building".

From the presentation of Raymond Zimmermann

21 MEXICO

With Indian peoples

The Country

Mexico is a very mountainous country, with an average elevation of 2000 meters. This leads to a very uneven population distribution. The population is 86 million, of whom 22 million live in the capital, Mexico City. By the year 2020 this city will be the most populous in the world with 32 million inhabitants.

Other features of the country are its 3,000 km-long border with the United States, its exploding birth rate (one birth every 8 seconds) and the distribution of its population: 70% urban, 30% rural.

The Conquest

When Hernan Cortes landed in Mexico in 1519 the country was inhabited by an ancient people with cultures and a civilization equally ancient and highly developed. As it turned out, this "meeting of two worlds" was rather the invasion of one world by the other and resulted in a massacre both human and cultural. Within 20 years the Indian population had fallen from 20 million to 1.2 millions.

The Indians today

Nowadays the Indian communities are to be found in bleak "safety zones", uninhabited by *Métis*. This remoteness explains their miserable circumstances.

In order to realise the full dimension of their wretchedness however it is necessary to be aware of another aspect of their lives: their relations with the *Métis* community.

Métis comprise 68% of the population, Indians 23%. The *Métis* see the Indians as inferior, without culture or moral values, illiterate. They despise them and either ignore or reject them. The Indians have absorbed this sense of inferiority and have taken refuge in silence.

On the religious level the Indian soul is one deeply attuned to God. The Indian religion is sense and ritual oriented. The Indian himself lives in a world of silence, on the mountain, and this shapes his life and his mind, it brings him into contact with God. He perceives God as one who loves him and who carries in his hands his destiny and that of every human being and of all things. He also has a deep and pure veneration for Mary, who is venerated under the title of *Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe*.

It should also be noted that, although the Indian people accept the Gospel message with confidence, they are nevertheless on the defensive as regards the Church, whose clergy are 95% *Métis*.

Spiritual presence

Over the past 20 years many confreres have participated in this mission project. Unfortunately, most of them have remained only a short time, in some cases just a few months. Today we are a group of 8: 3 Canadians, 1 French, 2 Irish, 1 Polish and 1 American for 4 missions and 2 houses of formation.

The objective of the group

In this situation we see the Indians as "those oppressed and most disadvantaged, as a group or as individuals", referred to in SRL 12.

Each parish is made up of a central (*Métis*) village and many communities scattered through the mountains and sometimes difficult to get to, where the Indians live. In fact, each parish is a border post between two worlds where each of us is a witness to the rejection and indifference of the *Métis* with regard to the Indians.

In 1987 our group drew up a joint document in which we laid out the general orientations of our missionary work for all our parishes. This twelve-page document, which is revised every three years, directs our energies towards:

Catechesis. This is our top priority and it is directed to everyone. It involves 250 catechists, who themselves receive ongoing education.

Liturgy. There is a well-defined intent to have the Indians celebrate the liturgy and the sacraments in their own villages, without having to come in to the central village. Holding the liturgical celebrations in the Indian villages allows them to express their faith according to their own religious sensibility.

Lay Development. This is done mainly through various organisations, which we support, encourage and promote.

Youth Ministry. It is worth noting that there seems to be considerable respect between the young *Métis* and Indians. During meetings one can see that the *Métis* listen to the Indians and that the Indians are prepared to speak in front of the *Métis*. Some *Métis* have undertaken specific sharing activities to help the Indian community.

Promoting Vocations. In this area there is a great deal of ground to be made up because of the prejudice that believed the Indians didn't have the necessary aptitudes for the priesthood. This prejudice is widely held, even among the clergy. We might note that all three diocesan priests of Indian origin in our diocese come from our Spiritan parishes. All this has brought about the opening of two houses of formation (1985 and 1988) where at the moment we have accepted eleven young men, including one student in Theology and two doing their Novitiate in Trinidad.

Inculturation or "accompanying"

Our main concern is to ensure that the Gospel will really be seen as Good News in the Indian communities under our care and that the Indian will be able to live and express his faith as an Indian, without having to deny who he is, without having to become a *Métis*, in order to be a Christian. We work in the Indian communities in order that these communities will recover their trust in the Church. We work in the local Church so that it may take the Indians into consideration. We do our best to be the voice of the voiceless both in the church and in the midst of the *Métis* society where we live.

Our way of "accompanying", our welcome, the interest we take in everything concerning their life, their sufferings and their hopes: all this is meant to bear witness in the midst of these people to their importance in our eyes and in the eyes of God.

We strive to establish an atmosphere of trust and respect between the Indians and ourselves. We try to get to know their customs and their culture. It is necessary to learn to walk at their pace. The attitude of the Indians towards us and the trust which has gradually been established between

their community and us is a great encouragement to the efforts each of us has made.

Despite various limitations

This is how our group has tried to reply to the pastoral and human challenge posed by the situation of the Indians in Mexico. Short of means and conscious of our own limitations, we try to respond with as little clumsiness as possible to a situation which we see as deeply missionary. In spite of the tenuous nature of our presence in the country, the Spirit makes us face the future of our mission in Mexico with peace, joy and trust.

Christian Choquereau

22 HAITI

In solidarity with poor, oppressed peoples

At the end of 150 years

The third involvement of Spiritans with Haiti brings us back to our origins. The first involvement was that of Eugene Tisserand, Libermann's companion and Prefect Apostolic of Haiti from 1843 to 1845; the second was in 1860 at the time of the Concordat. The whole story is bound up with the College of St Martial and with the unfolding of events during the dictatorship, then from 1970 to 1986 with the work for Haitian refugees in the Bahamas and in the United States and Canada.

The return of the Spiritans in 1986 was characterized by the option for the most abandoned which arose from the meetings of the Latin-American Bishops at Medellin and Puebla. The joint commitment of the Spiritans, put into effect according to the gifts and charisms of each one, is enmeshed in the events and major crises of the country: the fall of the dictatorship in 1986, the bloody elections of '87, trickery and oppression, new kinds of dictatorship, and finally the free elections of 1990 which brought President Aristide to power, followed by the coup d'état of 1991 which forced him into exile and led to a new wave of repression. It has been a painful progress towards democracy, with the existence of social divisions which have not spared the Church itself, with the popular movement for recognition of rights and freedom in continual conflict with vested interests.

Spiritans presence today

When they returned to Haiti, the Spiritans had no fixed abode and were taken in by friendly communities. The Archbishop was unwilling to return the St Martial buildings.

Thanks to some donations, it was possible to build a scholasticate and acquire a house as District headquarters.

In 1987 the mission of Pont Sondé was opened, when the bishop of Gonaïves gave an area of first evangelisation, the flatlands of Artibonite, to the Spiritans. In 1988 we were given the tasks of running Caritas and of ministry to youth in the diocese of Jacmel. Other works were added such as the "*Libèté*" newspaper and publishing house, a library, an audio-visual center at Pétionville and a peasant community project.

There is a healthy supply of Spiritan candidates and we have been able to resolve the problem of formation in collaboration with other Provinces. At the moment there are twelve Spiritan priests.

Significant undertakings

In this wide-ranging variety of activities we highlight certain ones connected with the socio-economic and political life of the country.

* The personality and political influence of Fr Antoine Adrien who, starting as a member of the opposition during the dictatorship of General Avril when he organised protest movements, became a convener and moderator promoting participatory democracy with a view to the holding of free elections. He became an adviser to candidate Aristide and then coordinator of the presidential commission concerned with negotiations for the return from exile of the President. This kind of political involvement in serious and exceptional circumstances calls for clarity of thought and judgment.

* The issue of land in Artibonite. This is an area traditionally connected with the practice of voodoo where peasant land-claim movements have been active and there

have been battles between rival groups which have led to massacres, arson and rustling. Spiritans have frequently been involved with these problems and conflicts, aiming always towards conciliation and having recourse to lawyers and legal proceedings, to the media and to consciousness raising. Help in re-building some villages has been sought. Agrarian reform has come up against the big land-owners, a conflict which was one of the causes of the coup d'état. The presbytery was invaded by the soldiers on one occasion and has had to be guarded several times. Here too, the nature of our activity needs to be re-assessed and perhaps toned down.

* "*Libèté*" (Liberty) newspaper. This is not only a newspaper but also a publishing house which has produced a lectionary and breviary. The newspaper was the first one to be brought out entirely in Créole between the 29th of November 1990 and the 1st of October 1991. Its publication was suspended after the events of 1991. The objectives of the newspaper were to reach out to people at the grass-roots, to improve literacy, raise consciousness, promote the creole language and to provide a forum for discussion. This enterprise well deserves another launching, keeping in mind the lessons to be learned concerning both style and content.

Poverty and injustice: a challenge

The Spiritan district of Haiti is small and weak in financial resources. Its future is uncertain and threatened. The plentiful supply of vocations which come from the ordinary people of the towns and from the peasantry can create problems of cultural alienation. Nevertheless the Spiritan team is steadfast in its intention of service to the poor. Its experience can be of use to the Congregation as a whole if it leads us to dwell on how our faith expresses itself when confronted with the socio-political problems which mark the difficult transition towards a true democracy, resistance to

totalitarianism and the building of a country truly intended for all the poor. The distinctive situation in Haiti, where the poor are humiliated and marginalised, should find an echo with those Christians and missionaries of Africa and Latin America who have the same concerns.

From the presentation of Max Dominique

24 LOMIE (CAMEROON)

Working with the Baka pygmies

A century of Spiritan history

This Lomié project has a Spiritan history that goes back a whole century. When Henri Trilles arrived in Gabon in 1892 he began to investigate the pygmies who still lived deep in the forest. This was his approach: to gain contact with them by learning their language, while recognizing that the pygmies would permit overtures when they wished, would be seen when it suited them and would speak in their own good time.

A half century later, Ignace Dhellemmes found the Baka pygmies in the process of emerging from the depths of the forest in order to set themselves up in the vicinity of the Bantu villages. He became involved in their health problems, visiting them from one encampment to the next. He became their protector in their difficulties with the Bantu people.

Twenty years ago a Spiritan, Marie-Albéric Mayse, was the instigator in resettling the Baka encampments in the region of Lomié. In 1972 a positive exodus - a return to the forest - brought a full 20% of the Baka population of the Lomié region to a location in the forest where they gradually created a pilot-village, *Le Bosquet*, 35 kms from the capital of Lomié. The purpose of this move was to distance themselves from Bantu dominance.

What Spiritans did for the pygmies usually was peripheral to the main work with Bantu Christian communities of the entire, extensive region of Lomié, home today to 20 to 25 thousand people. About 7 thousand of these are Baka. The main characteristic of the present Spiritan project, which has been getting under way for some years, is its communitarian

aspect and the fact that it forms an integral part of the overall project of the Lomié community.

The approach to the pygmies

According to Trilles, and this is equally true today, the approach to the pygmies means that one tries to meet them on their own ground. Dhelemmes says one must distance oneself from the Bantus and Albéric maintains that one must live in their (the Baka) midst. In Lomié we remind ourselves of another fact: this approach does not depend on us, but first of all on the Baka themselves. Then, it depends on the Bantu also. Indeed, the Baka can make themselves invisible, culturally invisible. They manage to preserve their identity by hiding behind their allotted roles in relation to the preponderant Bantu. This is a kind of "forward flight" (Bahuchet) instead of "backward flight" into the forest, which they can no longer do. It means that the missionary approach can only succeed with patience and a willingness to wait until the time when contact is sought and accepted on both sides. We would like this to happen in understanding with the Bantu communities.

The ecological situation

For the Baka, the ecological situation of the region where the equatorial forest is being harvested and destroyed, means a dramatic exodus. They are losing not only their day to day style of living as hunter-gatherers, but also that life-giving relationship they have with the forest. "The forest is destroyed, the forest weeps ... we are no longer in our own home." Amongst this ancient race there exists a cosmic spirituality now under threat. From them comes a cry which we cannot ignore: "We ourselves are the earth. If you destroy the earth, you destroy man also."

With this total transformation of their lives, how can the Baka salvage something of their identity as people of the forest? What can we do to support them as they make this wrenching transition from the semi-nomadic life of hunter-gatherers in the forest to modern life, with its system of forest-based agricultural production, or possibly to a fixed mode of living together with the Bantu population?

The Baka-Bantu relationship

The most critical aspect of the whole project is the transformation of the unbalanced relationship between the dominant Bantus and the subordinate Baka. There are three separate issues here. The first concerns the re-acquisition of their land by the Bakas, then a fair division of the land between the Bakas and the Bantus. Following this would come the development of forest-based agriculture by the two groups - especially the cultivation of starch-based crops - tubers, bananas, cereals - because the forest does not provide enough carbohydrates. This means that the Baka have to come and work for the Bantus day by day in order to obtain them.

Forest-based agricultural plantations may be the answer because the combination of lines of trees with the production of food in between these tree lines allows the stabilization of agriculture leading eventually to the raising of stock; it also encourages a modest reduction in the rate of exhaustion of the earth; and may even allow for the re-establishment of the forest, however modified. A third group of problems concerning Baka-Bantu relations centers on the issue of consciousness-raising right at the heart of the two groups. It is vital that they take into account the social and cultural implications of their economic interdependence and of all that flows from the transformation they are undergoing.

An oral culture

One of the "givens" of this situation is that theirs is an oral culture. For us, this is unknown territory: it is a way of expressing and transmitting living realities which has its own peculiar characteristics. It is important to become acquainted with this. We believe that the Good News of the Kingdom seeks to inculturate itself precisely in this oral culture. It should be done in little groups of learners who try to reformulate the Gospel in their own manner of expression, but all the while bringing them face to face with a new sense of the Gospel: learners who will commit themselves to the task of memorizing in recitations and choruses, who will then celebrate and pass on what they have learned.

Mary

Mary has the deepest understanding of inculturation and living along with peoples. She ensured not only the telling of Christ's story, but also a meeting with him as one of us. This Marian character of all in-depth evangelisation corresponds to the important part played by their women in the Baka oral culture. Their songs and their blessings implore the good fortune of God-Komba. The role of women in the forest liturgy of the Baka recalls the role of the servants at the marriage feast of Cana. There too there was a sort of conspiracy between the mother of Jesus and the servants. She said to them: "Whatever he tells you to do, do it." They understood the key-word which opens up the Gospel, bringing into being the hour of Jesus the Messiah. And it was a word spoken in the original Genesis ... The Gospel becomes accessible when it is inculturated.

So much still to be done

There is much still to be done in the Lomié project: living amongst the Baka, inculturation of the message of the

Gospel in their oral tradition, the transformation of their relations with the Bantu, co-operation in forest-based agriculture: all these have still to be accomplished. We appeal to the young African Spiritans and to those from elsewhere, to join in helping us provide a Spiritan presence which will promote awareness of the dignity of the Baka people.

Although progress has been made in the areas of health, education and forest-based agriculture, the Lomié project is still puny and uncertain. But there is a great deal at stake in the encounter between mission and the Baka. At the very least let it be said that for the Spiritan charism in the future, the flock which wanders in the desert or in the forest will always be of equal importance with the great flock astray in the city.

Paul Cuypers

24 ST LAURENT DU MARONI (GUYANA)

A new image of the parish

A parish like many another

"*Nouvelle Image*" (New Image) is a project of the parish of St Laurent (French Guyana). This is a traditional parish of about 8,000 members, of whom the majority are Creole. It is a flourishing parish with adult, youth and children's groups and catechetical and liturgical activities well moderated by laypeople. However, in spite of its flourishing activities, this parish was a little too introverted, cut off from the great generality of baptised persons and too little open to other groups (immigrants, Amerindians and AfroAmericans) who live in the vicinity of the town.

Objective and startup

Such was the finding of a group of fifty parishioners who met each evening during the course of a month to familiarize themselves with the parishes' "New Image" project. The project was presented by Fr François Creac'h, a Spiritan and a member of the Movement For A Better World. This movement seeks to give to a parish or a diocese a new vision of the Church, which is the mystery of communion, the people of God. Following the procedure of the movement, they first made a rigorous analysis of the parish in its present-day human and religious context, bearing in mind its history. Next they set up new structures for it: a parish coordinating group, similar groups for each neighbourhood, a parish bulletin and a distribution network for the bulletin. The new structures involved not only those laypeople already involved in parish life, but also many others on whom no previous demands had been made.

Key points

In accordance with the objectives of the project, intended eventually to create basic ecclesial communities, about a dozen neighbourhood groups were set up to encourage people to get to know each other better and to become more deeply involved with each other. This process was promoted by means of the celebration of popular religious feasts which are part of the religious faith of the people and of local custom (Creoles love celebration) but also by means of programmes for the reception and assistance of immigrants, refugees from Surinam fleeing their country's civil war, and by activities highlighting everyday events (births, marriages and deaths). Some of these celebrations or "solidarity activities" are prepared by the people in a given neighbourhood, but are celebrated or participated in by the people of all the neighbourhoods together.

An enduring task

Begun in 1984, the project is still in its formative stages and has still to achieve a satisfactory degree of awareness among the people of the neighbourhoods; since it is a project that embraces the whole parish and all its members, it requires lots of patience and gradual progress. It has the great merit of having persevered in spite of moments of hesitation and discouragement. There is no doubt that the project has been a great sign of hope for the parish because, thanks to its method of devising projects and of evaluating them after each parish-wide activity (of which there are about ten a year), it has created a great sense of unity among the people and has brought them together as signs of a Church that is more fraternal and more welcoming to all. The second phase of the project will help the neighbourhood groups gradually to become communities of faith which discover the Word of God while they bear witness through their love and their prayer.

All the baptised are part of it

Finally, one can say that this is a project of interest to all Spiritans involved in parish ministry because it is essentially a missionary project. It is aimed at all the baptised in the belief that the poor are the primary agents of evangelisation (actively and passively). Spiritan spirituality can only flourish in a project which bases its pastoral method on the Spirit of the Risen Jesus, working today just as much in the context of reevangelisation as in that of first evangelisation.

Jean Pedrono

25 PAKISTAN

With religious and ethnic minorities

A few among other minorities

In Pakistan Christians represent barely 1% of the total population of 110 million. Non-Muslims make up a scant 3% of that population. This is the strongly Islamic context in which a Spiritan team has worked for the last fifteen years. At the moment they number ten and work for a minority Church, amongst people who themselves are also ethnic minorities. Spiritan ministry in Pakistan takes two forms: that among the Punjabi Christians in Sukkur and Rahim Yar Khan and that with the Marwari Bhils in Rahim Yar Khan.

In the Parish of Rahim Yar Khan there are more than 600 Christian families, some in the towns, some scattered throughout the villages. These Christians, unskilled workers, especially street sweepers in the town or agricultural workers in the countryside with very low salaries and chronically in debt, are looked down on by the majority of the population because of their status as manual workers, and because of their religion and their ethnic origin.

In the same region there are 25,000 Marwari Bhils who live mainly in rural areas. Employed in agricultural work or as shepherds, they belong to particular castes and are like, the Punjabi Christians, victims of discrimination.

Our pastoral work

As regards parish work, we are involved in the preparation and celebration of the sacraments in the various communities, family visitation and promotional programmes, with responsibility for schools and community centers.

We see ourselves as co-workers at the heart of the local Church, that is, as co-workers with the Bishop and the Christian community of the diocese of Multan. We are involved in health and education projects in co-operation with women religious, teachers and catechists. Everyone participates in the decision-making process, ourselves included, trying to reveal and share the Gospel with the people.

We enjoy cordial relations with the diocesan clergy and have tried to encourage vocations to the local church. Many aspirants to the priesthood and the religious life have expressed satisfaction with the pastoral courses they have taken in our parishes.

The meaning of the Spiritan presence in Pakistan

We are a group of ten Spiritan confreres, including six priests. Thus, there is in the group a diversity of ministers, respected and accepted for the variety of their gifts. Each one is valued for what he is, not for what he has or can do. This multiplicity of talents, this creativity, cannot fail to enrich the Spiritan work and the community.

Our work is done in the service of the local church. At the same time we maintain our Spiritan identity. We strengthen this identity by living in community, by working as an international team, sharing all our resources, whether in money, skills or various talents. We value each others' company and share at a deep level our concerns, our joys and sorrows, our successes and failures. In this account we want to outline a Spiritan model at this stage of the Congregation's evolution. We are concerned with replacing fidelity to an institution with a more relational model, where each member is encouraged and affirmed by a dynamic commitment in line with the charism of the Congregation.

Each of us is constantly stimulated and encouraged to remember that our methodology is formulated with our specific goals in mind. We look on ourselves as a community at the service of another community and see something very important in our working as a team. Our presence among these minorities in a repressive society, the creation of links with them and between them, constitutes the beginning of a new network of relations which is cause for hope. The two communities hold two annual meetings, each lasting about five days. These meetings provide an occasion for prayer, reflection, study, planning and for the examination of all sorts of issues. We ourselves also come together in January for a one-day meeting.

A way towards growth

Our stay in Pakistan has been a growth experience for each one of us. Each has grown personally and intellectually, through our community life, our ministry and our working as a team. We have also acquired a variety of practical skills in the accomplishing of our tasks.

We look on our life in Pakistan as theology in action, a means towards a deeper knowledge of the Trinitarian God who reveals himself in the daily life and the struggles of the people.

From the presentation of Eamon McCann

26 AUTEUIL (FRANCE)

Caring for disadvantaged youth

The Auteuil mission

This is an educational project with emphasis on the person. In the first place, it involves working closely with the individual inasmuch as it is necessary to listen respectfully to troubled young men so that they will find with us a fraternal, family environment where their aspirations and their problems are given a sympathetic hearing and they are respectfully helped to resolve them. During the course of the years when they are thus received in a house for children and young men, they succeed in regaining confidence in themselves vis-a-vis adults and life in general. At the same time we readily recognise that during four years of daily life, living with them around the clock, we do not always get to know the real problems of each one of them.

This mission also involves a career education dimension. Each young man chooses his occupation and in the course of becoming absorbed by this occupation and its attendant skills rediscovers the joy of work. The skills diploma which each should achieve encourages them to set a high value on the education they receive. Some of them graduate with trade qualifications and a few go on to higher studies.

The spiritual dimension often takes the form of an introduction to belief, implying a first evangelisation for those who have hitherto had no knowledge of Christianity. This instruction is given to each one with due regard for his religious affiliation. Many of the boys follow a catechetical course and receive the sacrament of Christian initiation.

The overall purpose of Auteuil is to introduce young men to the working world after suitable preparation. They will

have undergone psychological and professional preparation for this beforehand through annual courses taken under actual working conditions. But each one on graduation must find a job and accommodation. Needless to say, we help them with this difficult task, and we do not regard anyone who has not acquired them as being self-supporting.

The job of the Spiritans there

The Spiritan mission began in 1923 when the diocese of Paris asked the Spiritans to take charge of this professional school of 300 apprentices at Auteuil. Fr Brottier and his confreres were sent there and built up the work to the point where is comprised 3,000 young men in 1950. It became an international Spiritan District, devoted to the human and professional development of young men in difficulty.

In our time, the Oeuvre d'Auteuil has been handed over to lay managers working in the Spiritan tradition. The 23 Spiritan members of the Province of France who work there participate in the spiritual care of 2,000 staff members and of 4,000 young men in 28 establishments.

Problems

There is no shortage of challenges in trying to ensure an ever more effective alignment of our educational work with the realities of today's world. We ask ourselves from time to time what initiatives we should take and what are the new imperatives we have to meet in the demanding world of today's youth. There is another question: what image is projected by Auteuil, considering the elaborate resources required nowadays for a recognised technical education and for accommodation which will meet the standards of the French social and supervisory services. At all events we can say that the management of the enterprise is highly efficient.

Spiritane values

Spiritane values incorporated in the work of Auteuil which are in accordance with the Spiritane Rule of Life are easily identified:

- helping young men in difficulty to get back on their feet;
- the overall work of human and spiritual development of young people;
- evolution in accordance with our history of Spiritane commitment;
- the loyalty of donors whose contributions make us self-supporting;
- collaboration in the Spiritane tradition with many laypeople;
- responsibility for the spiritual welfare of beneficiaries in a project undertaken on behalf of the poor.

It was at Auteuil that Fr Brottier found the pathway to holiness.

Jean Savoie

27 EAST AFRICAN PROVINCE

The birth of a new Province

A short history

Our Christianity in East Africa is rooted in the history of our Congregation. The Holy Ghost Fathers were the first Catholic missionaries to East Africa, opening the way for the subsequent groups. On their arrival on the East Coast in 1862, they moved quickly to the center of the slave trade at Bagamoyo, a name meaning "throw away your heart". The lack of a common language in which to communicate with the disparate tribes led them to draw up a first Swahili dictionary, collecting the common words and phrases used by both the African tribes and the Arabs. From this uniting factor their work started.

They purchased slaves, set them free, gave them a home, and taught them to live worthy of their human dignity. The freed slaves became the first Catholics and catechists from whom Christianity spread throughout East Africa. It is through this charismatic ministry that the charism of the Spiritans became visible.

After the first World War, the founders of the mission, who came from Alsace and Germany became *personae non gratae* and the mission was later entrusted to our confreres from America, Ireland, and Holland. Through the spirit of solidarity and unity, they established solid bases for the East African Province. This joint venture answers the call of the East African bishops that they should start recruiting Africans into their religious Congregation. The mission's original purpose was to train a local clergy without which there could be no authentic presence of the Church in Africa.

In the local Church

Our history and the thrust of our mission is mainly rooted in the spirit and charism of our elder confreres who gave their lives for our African soil. Some of the confreres who lie buried at Bagamoyo died very young. Their courage and enthusiasm give us new life and courage to measure up to our difficult apostolate both in formation and mission. It is by looking back to what our elders accomplished that we can build our own Spiritan identity. The takeover of Bagamoyo parish and of the Museum is an effort by the East African Province to go deeper into our Spiritan history and roots. To lose our roots would mean the loss of our charism.

Though influenced by the history and works of our elders, the East African Province is aware that the situations in which our confreres worked has changed tremendously. This calls us to discern closely our Spiritan charism in the required time and space. What we look for is what is fundamental to us to-day, and to remain in fidelity with it. The charism of our elders was precisely an experience of the Spirit to answer a particular need. Concretely and pragmatically charism implies that our life will always involve something which the church has never seen before or at least never seen in this way.

Our mission

Trying to live our Spiritan charism in our time, the East African members have taken missions at home and missions far afield. Shifting from the ministry of slaves to the ministry of Refugees, of Youth and AIDS victims, this apostolate needs encouragement from the Holy Spirit.

One of the greatest human miseries we must face in our time is the AIDS issue. It is serious and yet it is not taken seriously enough. Our confreres both at home and far afield,

need knowledge and the techniques to fight this great evil of our time. We have realised the need of going deeper into our African cultures, because the problem of AIDS in Africa is rooted in our culture. The problem could be better approached on the basis of culture than that of the scientific search for cures. To accomplish this mission, increased solidarity, unity and cooperation among ourselves and between us and the people we serve is indeed of vital importance.

Unity and union

In the sense of the African saying, "I am, because we are and we are, because I am", the East African Province and the District of Kilimanjaro have seen the need of pooling their effort. This is because we are called to be a challenge to the disunity of the local Church. We are called to be the salt of the earth by our religious charism and this we will be only when we are united. Our singleness of mind and heart is service to those in need. Our singleness in authority makes clear and reinforces our position with the local Church, and serves to show that there is a common good of the entire region which can be attained and maintained only by recognition of this reality.

This union and unity is a step forward in the call for solidarity and regionalisation. It makes clear to us the question of authority between the Province, Foundation and Groups. As Africans we have a special respect and honour for our ancestors, those who have lived before us and worked before us. They are our mirror of what we are as Spiritans and what we will be in years to come. Unity, solidarity, cooperation and love are the key solutions of our missionary problems.

Augustine Shao

28 SERVOL (TRINIDAD)
SERvice VOLunteered for all:
Education by "respectful intervention"

A racial crossing point

The island of Trinidad is the southernmost in the Caribbean chain. Its population is just over one million, made up of a most intriguing mixture of races. Approximately 44% are of African origin, 44% of East Indian stock, while the remaining 12% can trace their origins to Europe. Because of intermarriage Trinidad society is remarkably cosmopolitan. Our Spiritan Province is typically Trinidadian having members from nearly all the races.

How it happened

In 1970 Trinidad experienced social unrest known as the Black Power Uprising. It took the form of mass demonstrations protesting the conditions of the poor. Some army officers mutinied and tried to overthrow the government by force of arms. The attempt failed but everyone knew that things could never be the same again.

It was in response to these "signs of the times" that one of our confreres, Fr Gerry Pantin resigned as science teacher at St Mary's College, and went into the "hot spot" of the unrest to meet the people and to ask them a simple question. "What can we do to help?" He went to listen. He went to help the people set their own agenda and to decide their own needs.

New approaches to education

His first target group was the 20 to 30 year olds. But it was the experience with this very group, "fixed and hardened" in their ways that advised SERVOL to concentrate its efforts on

the 16 to 19 year olds. SERVOL insists that the only valid way to make a contribution to society, or to enrich the lives of people is through a process which it calls *respectful intervention*. This implies that no matter how convinced we are that our ideas are right, we must put aside *cultural arrogance* which tends to make us feel that we have a monopoly on truth, and we must proceed to *dialogue*. It is as a result of this process that attention is focused today on two main age groups: the young children (0-5 years) and the adolescents (16-19 years).

Teaching how to be parents

SERVOL uses its 153 Early Childhood Centers catering for over five thousand 2-5 year olds, as centers of education for the parents as much as for the children. These centers are community oriented. Teachers from the community are trained and as in all SERVOL projects, if success is to be claimed, their contribution must be significant. Parents are taught the art of *respectful intervention* in the lives of their children.

However, because SERVOL has found a certain resistance to this message from adult parents who tend to be set in their ideas, it places even more hope on its Adolescent Parent Programme, in which the adolescents are trained how to be parents. This is done in special 14 week courses, designed to make the adolescents aware of the damage done to them by the *disrespectful intervention* of adults and teachers. They are urged to get in touch with their hidden anger and to ensure that it is not destructive to others. They are also urged not to make the same mistakes with their children as their parents made with them. It has 40 such Adolescent Training Centers touching the lives of some 3,000 adolescents a year. In addition, SERVOL is training teachers and instructors for Ministries of Education in 11 Caribbean islands.

For new-style children

SERVOL sees *respectful intervention* as the only solution to the problems of this turbulent and volatile world. It is imperative that we prepare a new type of child with a new vision.

Malcolm Galt

29 GAMU GOFA (ETHIOPIA)

Evangelise with our orthodox brothers

Ecumenical options

In response to the 1968 General Chapter the mission in Gamu Gofa began in 1972. Today there are a group of six Spiritans, five Irish and one French. Areas of "first evangelisation" were sought but careful studies of the province showed a deeply rooted widespread presence of the Orthodox Church. On re-examination the nature and method of the apostolate changed. An option to work with the Orthodox Church was adopted. This option had the backing of the Vicariate Council and in 1978 the Vicar Apostolic, Mons. Henry Bomers approved of this pastoral approach and believed that it was in line with Catholic teaching.

We began to work closely with the clergy and laity of the Orthodox Church. The strengthening and renewal of this church became the aim and gave motivation to our efforts. We engaged in a deepening of our understanding of the culture, language, theology and spirituality of the Orthodox Church. We involved ourselves in the setting up of a Training Center for the renewal of Orthodox priests and deacons. Here 70 clergy are trained each year. Orthodox catechetical programmes are promoted and much effort is given to creating greater mission and social awareness. Parish renewal is in progress in 39 parishes. We believe that this work gives concrete expression to the idea that the Oriental Churches, according to the principles of Vatican II and subsequent statements from Rome, cannot be a field of mission for other churches.

At the initiative of the Orthodox bishop, Abuna Zakarias, in 1983 the joint first evangelisation programme among the Hamar nomads began. This has now led to the establishment of three orthodox parishes in the desert lowlands.

Ecclesiology and missiology out of step

Paragraph 8 of *Lumen Gentium* tells us that the Catholic Church truly is the Church of Christ but it does not say that the Church of Christ can be identified completely with the Catholic Church. After Vatican II Pope Paul VI's *breve* during his visit to the ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople calls the Eastern Churches "Sister Churches in quite complete union with us". The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is a member of the Eastern Churches which allows its members "to enter into communion with the Holy Trinity" (*Unitatis Redintegratio* 15) and whose traditions "are directed towards right ordering of life, indeed towards a full contemplation of Christian truth" (U.R. 17) and whose "entire heritage ... belongs to the full catholic and apostolic character of the church" (U.R. 17).

There has been a renewal in ecclesiological statements but no renewal in guidelines for missionaries. Spiritans have been told by the Congregation for the Evangelisation of People (*Propaganda Fide*) to work independently of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and set up new Latin Communities. This is a missionary approach that returns to the "only the flock of St Peter is the church" ecclesiology, and does not admit that the Orthodox Church is the traditional expression of the Church of Christ in Ethiopia.

A spirituality to sustain this mission

Our ultimate aim is to lead people into a greater sharing in the life of the Triune God. For this we need a spirituality and not a strategy for mission.

- We are called to be ecumenical: being sensitive, to recognise the ways that God chooses to show himself.
- We are called into Dialogue and into Prayer: with the Orthodox we are first of all partners in prayer. Dialogue

begins with our praying together; it is rooted in our common gazing at God.

- We are called to be people of Faith: this is our commitment to oppose the separation of man from man.

- We are called into Friendship: we break down division by love and friendship. We accept our Orthodox brothers and sisters in their different background, culture, race and church tradition.

- We are called to wait for Gifts: we realise that unity is a gift and we do not create it. But while waiting for the coming of God's gifts, we do what we can here and now.

Brian O'Toole

30 ENGLAND *A new growth in an old tree*

Undertakings in spite of all

As an older Province, sickness, old age, diminishing numbers and very few vocations are facts which are continually present in our thinking and planning. Yet, paradoxically, confronted with this situation there is a heartening sense of optimism and dedication in the English Province. No one has ever suggested we should throw in the towel and prepare to die gracefully. On the contrary, the pressure has been for new and relevant initiatives, new missions abroad, new projects at home, however small they may be. The men are willing to take risks rather than seek security in maintaining, with our slender resources, what is known and safe. Consequently, besides our men working in Makurdi and Yola, we now have confreres in such new situations as North Cameroon, the Masai apostolate in Tanzania and the urban project in Durban, South Africa. As regards 'Mission at home', we have set up a Parish in Jersey (Channel Islands) for migrant Portuguese workers; a group of Spiritan Associates has been launched; two communities have been designated for Vocation/Youth Ministry and a project for London homeless is underway.

Youth ministry

A "new continent"

Their constant contact with young people has led those involved in vocations ministry to broaden their approach to a more general ministry to youth. It is no longer appropriate to present the idea of missionary vocation directly to them. In Post-Christian, secularised Britain, many young people, perceiving institutional religion as too authoritarian and irrelevant, have become disenchanted and alienated from the

Church. Many of them are searching for a meaning in life. Consequently, our approach to youth has turned into a missionary outreach to a marginalised group who today are largely unevangelised. Entering this "new continent" of youth presupposes undergoing a whole process of inculturation. In a massively complex Youth Culture, we have first to learn the language of young people and study their symbols, customs and traditions - only then can we try and lead the young person in a holistic and integral way into a personal relationship with Christ.

Faith in action

Well aware that youth have moved from a "culture of obedience" to a "culture of experience", we try to help them experience the meaning of faith-in-action by personally involving them in a whole series of events and activities that continue throughout the year: 100 mile walks, residential retreats, workshops, Taizé events, Lourdes Pilgrimages, talks, Pentecost Youth weekends and fortnightly Youth Group Meetings. Our aim is to build up their faith, helping young people to become leaders themselves and empowering them to minister to other young people. A significant new way of doing this was the opening up of our Manchester Community to three young men who live and work full time with our confreres for one year in their youth ministry. Youth are searching for community and acceptance. It seems that it is our community life-style and our personal witness to faith which has attracted many to take an interest in us. Opening our houses in Manchester and Glasgow so extensively to youth may have let our privacy be invaded and our comfortable routine disturbed, but it has allowed us to be questioned and challenged by young people and to be renewed and rejuvenated by them. We are also grateful that two young men are now in our Spiritan Formation Programme as a result of our approach to Youth Ministry.

Work with the homeless in London

One of the most crucial problems of urbanisation is the ever-increasing number of men and women who end up on the streets of our cities without a home of their own. Many are drug-addicts or alcoholics or have psychiatric disorders. Our student community in London, wanting to help, became involved in various hostels for the homeless and eventually ran their own "soup-run" once a week, taking food and clothing to those sleeping rough in central London. Fr John Kitchen later began to work full time in this area. Realising that constant support was necessary, especially for those trying to rid themselves of dependency on alcohol or drugs, a plan was developed to set up a community of two confreres who would invite people to stay with them for a limited time of rehabilitation before moving back to independent living. This initial plan unfortunately never came off, but it has led to the drawing up of the "Kairos Project" which is a housing project proposal for single homeless women and men with alcohol and/or soft drug dependency. It will be a home for rehabilitation, but despite our presence on the committee and appointment of a confrere as the resident manager of the home, it will not be a specifically Spiritan undertaking and will thus continue even if we are unable to keep our present personnel commitment. We believe our involvement in this Kairos Project can be a witness and perhaps a jolt to the conscience of those who have power to do something more permanent about the terrible plight of the homeless rejects of London.

Behind every prophet there ...

In the old Provinces, we must realise that old age, sickness and administrative works are all an integral part of the Mission of the Congregation. Behind every prophet there is a considerable number of men who cheerfully take on the less fashionable tasks in order to free him for this prophecy. Their

work is by no means "insignificant". Finally, if we in the older Provinces collaborate and share more, rationalise our resources and cut out any unnecessary duplication of effort, we may be pleasantly surprised at what the Holy Spirit has in store for us.

V. O'Toole, E. Mulcahy

31 SAO PAULO (BRAZIL)

Option for the poor and marginalised

One of the major contemporary problems is that we have distanced ourselves from the poor, the fallen and the marginalised and that we have too much time for discussions and theorising. As a consequence we have lost our thirst for God which is the fruit of the incarnate solidarity with the sufferings of the humiliated.

Jean Vanier

Facts and choices

The mission of the Church, in a continent of the humiliated and the handicapped has taken up a pastoral line of incarnate solidarity in a concrete way in the last thirty years. It has truly been a time of grace, of conversion, of martyrdom.

This pastoral action is born of a life situation which is perceived as evil, from a centuries-old and scandalous enslavement of human beings, intolerable to those who believe in the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. It is born also of the conviction that the God of Christians is gratuitous gift, mystery, unconditional love that subverts all man's scheming.

This twin sourced stance means that the Church in Brazil views herself as a pilgrim church, a sent church (*missa est*), a church which seeks out the fallen on the foot-paths, in the gutters, on the hills and hollows of favelas, in the fields and valleys of the immense land of the disinherited. And so in its turn the Church assumes the suffering features of the Negroes, the Indian, the women, the children, the day-labourers, the workers - features simultaneously exploited and profoundly mystical.

Without food, thirsting for God

The pastoral work of the Church is done against this backdrop. The situations demand creative and concrete replies which are addressed both to the conditions of socio-economic misery and to the situations of hunger, of beauty, for the word of God, for the bread of life. One of these replies in Brazil is the Basic Christian Community as presence of the Church born in this dual source (material misery and religious mysticism): it is the Church, pilgrim people, in the heart of the world; church which is also at prayer, penitent and celebrative. Another form of being church is expressed in the simple being present on the street, in the favela, in the jails, in the red-light district, wherever there are broken people, be they rural or urban.

A base christian community is born

What we wished to present to the Chapter were some lived experiences which capture a little of what it is to be Church today, in the city of São Paulo. In the Basic Christian Community from Leme we experienced moral and social breakdown in which it seemed impossible to create any form of Eucharistic fraternity. It seemed that a breakdown in the material world must lead inevitably to a spiritual breakdown. There was of course some leadership present but it was with the arrival of the priest that this leadership became aware of its socio-economic need (water) alongside the force of faith (Eucharist). In that way the Word becomes incarnate but without a confusing of the kingdom of the world with the world of the Kingdom.

All of this was clear in the dramatization presented by the group which started off with scenes of dispersion with each one sweeping his bit of street but with no one interested in his neighbour; a parable of the fragmentation lived by the

humiliated. In the second scene when the community problems were discussed (water, creche, public transport, etc.) the conclusion that something had to be done became clear. Even then, some were not willing to join in the struggle. But with time and leadership contributed by the priest, participation grew until a victory was achieved and water flowed.

Water is a strong liturgical, mystical and religious symbol. It is clear that the victory had to be celebrated in the context of faith, fidelity and fraternity; a Brazilian celebration ... with song, dance and a profound hope in the Lord of History.

Favela children

The favela presentation brought us a group of children from the favela in São Paulo; creative children who sing and dance to the sound of instruments made from waste collected in dumps, inviting us to join in their samba rhythm; children who represent the cruel face of a Brazil where infants and children, 53% of the population, live in absolute misery; a reminder for those of us who eat and dress well that it is true that "human beings live not on bread alone," but he does need his daily bread.

Following on the children's presentation, we had a slide show in two parts, portraying intermingled two faces of the city, opulence and impious misery. The show had a background musical theme with no spoken words. It all took place in complete silence. At the end a poem was read, The Way of Emmaus, the way of desolation, the way of the encounter, the way of the table of reconciliation.

Patrick Clarke

PART IV

PARTICULAR GUIDELINES FROM THE CHAPTER

32 Reference points for animation

The mainline activity during the Chapter centered upon the Significant Experiences; alongside that the Delegates spent time in considering a number of definite topics that the outgoing General Council had submitted to them. Guidelines were worked out and formulated.

It was not possible to give the necessary time desirable to the study of these topics and what has emerged thus bears the trace of the haste with which they had to be worded. However, these documents presented here as "particular guidelines", do set up reference points for the leadership of the Congregation in the future.

33 ADMINISTRATION AND ANIMATION

1 An urgent plea for animation

Faced with the complexity of present circumstances, and the novelty of some of the new demands being made on us, circumscriptions are experiencing difficulty in taking clear and coherent decisions.

The work already achieved in creating and stabilising relationships of solidarity and justice between north and south should be courageously continued.

This is all part of the area of animation confided to the General Council. However, because of the decentralised nature of our Congregation, the General Council sometimes finds that it lacks the necessary means to carry out tasks, especially in the area of formation, where many demands are being placed on it.

2 General Council

2.1 Areas of animation

We look to the General Council to inspire us towards a mission "which would be more of a spirituality than a strategy", so that we can maintain a unity in our diversity.

We see so many of our brothers committed in situations of trauma, war, exile, and looking for special care and support from the Council. We ask the Council for specific encouragement to all in the area of justice and peace.

We recognise the range of ministries with youth and works of education in which Spiritans are involved, and we wish to give them our backing, especially those who are working

with the under-privileged and trying to help them to be masters of their own future. The pastoral care of young people also includes work for missionary and religious vocations. We ask the General Council to give the necessary leadership in this area.

We are aware of the importance of a formation with clear goals, and we ask the Council to encourage Provinces to provide such a programme. The General Council has a particular responsibility in this area, especially in all that concerns the distribution of formators.

We ask that one Assistant should have special responsibilities for formation. His visits would be made primarily to formation communities and he would work in conjunction with the teams involved.

We ask the General Council to continue to give attentive leadership in sustaining a coherent policy in financial matters. Likewise our attitude towards material goods must be looked at in the light of the disparity between north and south.

We warmly welcome the increasing number of men and women, lay Spiritans, committing themselves with us, and we ask the General Council to help find a suitable training for them.

We rejoice in the renewed interest in the vocation of Spiritan Brother, but we note that the vision of the Spiritan vocation in itself, as set out in the first chapter of the Rule of Life, has still not got through to the mentality of most confreres. We ask the General Council to focus especially on putting this vision across.

2.2 Communication

The exchange of information is the most important instrument for animating both individuals and circumscriptions. Following the line used by this General Chapter, we would like to encourage all Spiritans to share their own experiences. In this way, we would all be making our contribution to animating each other. We extend a special invitation to older confreres to join in this sharing. We would urge the General Council to look out for new forms of communication and information, more apt to draw responses and exchanges.

2.3 Visits

The General Council, for its part, can rely upon the members of the Congregation being open and loyal towards it. It has our full confidence regarding how it should go about its work. Circumscriptions and Regions will be happy to receive their visits. We hope that, as far as possible, these visits will coincide with Chapters and Assemblies. As experience has shown us in the past, the Superior General cannot be expected to visit all the circumscriptions within the limit of a 6 year mandate. In what concerns him, we suggest that a visitation plan be made over a longer period. More frequent visits will be made by other members of the General Council. The planning of these visits should be done in cooperation with the Circumscriptions and Regions. They should also be coordinated with visitations done by the Superiors of the Circumscriptions.

3 Generalate Service Personnel

The roles of the Secretary General and other members of the services should be looked at. When the General Council asks for a particular person for the post of General Secretary, we ask that the highest priority be given to such a request.

The same applies, *mutatus mutandis*, to persons sought for other posts in the General Services. At the same time, we ask the General Council to draw up job descriptions and to place requests for persons needed at least one year in advance.

4 Organisation

Because the times are changing and there are new situations in our fields of activity, an evaluation of our management system seems to be needed. We ask the General Council to make this evaluation and avail of expert advice as deemed necessary.

34 SPIRITAN BROTHERS

1 An essential vocation for our mission

The Chapter was very impressed by the presentation made by the group in Pakistan. In this difficult situation, the group of ten Spiritans (4 brothers, 6 priests) has a brother as superior. The community life is such that all share in the pastoral activity, with each person's particular charism being respected.

In both Brazil and Paraguay, brothers are superiors of formation houses. Often, due to professional training and not being restricted to local church institutions, a brother can enter into contact with people more easily than a priest.

With very few exceptions, there seems to be no separation between brothers and priests in the Congregation. In some places the titles "Father" or "Brother" are no longer used.

These few facts, chosen among many others, testify to an evolution which is in conformity with the spirit of the Rule of Life. In its first chapter, entitled "Our Spiritan Vocation", the Rule makes no mention of ordained ministers as such, in order to highlight the calling of the religious and missionary life. At a meeting held in Rome in February 1992, six brothers, coming from a wide variety of backgrounds, looked at the present situation, drew conclusions and made recommendations for the future of this special vocation, which is so essential to the life of our Congregation. The Superior General's Report gives an accurate account of this meeting (Nos 3.6.1 to 3.6.5).

2 Attention to formation

In the light of these developments, we are very conscious of the importance to be given to the formation of

brothers. If all brothers should receive a professional formation which will prepare them for mission service, they also need a theological formation adapted to the kind of ministry they will be doing and a serious preparation for missionary life, including the learning of foreign languages. To this end, circumscriptions should help each other by organising an exchange of those in formation.

Certain large cities, in Africa and elsewhere, offer, at the same time, possibilities of both professional and religious formation. The superiors of the circumscriptions concerned should make an assessment of these possibilities. The system followed in many areas is as follows; the one community is established for all those in formation, whether they are preparing for the ordained ministry or doing a professional formation.

3 Sharing responsibilities

It would be desirable if, in the years ahead, apostolic teams could be set up which would include three kinds of vocation; priests, brothers and lay associates.

Several times during the Chapter, the question of having a brother on the General Council was raised. It would be normal, therefore, for brothers to be included in councils of circumscriptions, wherever possible, on the basis of their competence. We also ask that an approach be made to the Congregation for Religious with a view to allowing brothers to become major superiors.

4 Looking to the future

Finally, the question of brothers cannot be discussed without looking at our missionary history. This history has included some wonderful brothers, models of holiness such as

we have all known. But our history also has its dark side. Too often, in order to honour the status of priests, the status of brothers was lowered so that they became second class Spiritans. What is important now is to look to the future and to be attentive to whatever will encourage this way of life, consecrated to the service of the mission of Christ.

35 MATERIAL GOODS AND FINANCIAL POLICY

1 Sharing and solidarity

All Christians are called to respect the universal purpose for which created goods were intended (*Gaudium et Spes* 69-71). As Spiritans we have other reasons why we should share: our vow of poverty and our concern for Justice and Peace for the sake of Evangelisation.

Listening to the "significant experiences" of our confreres throughout the world has helped us realise that we all carry together the responsibility for the apostolic undertakings of the Congregation.

Mission itself invites us to live an ever deeper solidarity with each other. It also reveals to us the importance of both personal and community dimension of poverty.

Not giving an account of our expenses, using gifts or a personal bank account as if they were our own, refusing to share amongst ourselves - all this damages our credibility and destroys community life (SRL 65).

In the name of solidarity with the poorest who are our priority (SRL 70), we commit ourselves to a radical sharing, because of a genuine concern for honesty and justice.

2 General Bursar

The General Bursar is an *ex officio* member of the General Council. He will not usually be asked to make visits to the circumscriptions except for what concerns specific reasons of finance, or animation in this area. Moreover, the General Bursar is asked:

- * to develop a plan to help and animate the bursars of circumscriptions;
- * to collaborate with circumscriptions and mission bursars to help those confreres who wish to present Spiritan projects to funding agencies.

The General Council will name a Finance Committee made up of experts (from outside or within the Congregation) in the area of accounting and administration/management to assist the General Bursar in drawing up a financial policy for the Congregation.

The General Council will study the volume of work and the needs of the General bursar's office. If necessary, personnel will be sought, Spiritan or non-Spiritan.

3 Insurance for confreres

Circumscriptions will take the necessary steps to arrive progressively at insuring all their members against health risks and to set up a retirement fund (cf. SRL 232.5).

During its mandate, and in collaboration with the circumscriptions concerned, the General Administration will continue the studies already undertaken and develop a plan through which all the members of the Congregation will be assured adequate health and retirement benefits.

4 Cor Unum

Out of a concern for solidarity and justice, all circumscriptions will make their "voluntary contribution" to Cor Unum every year.

The amount of this annual "voluntary contribution" is left to the judgement of each circumscription.

5 Direct help

When one circumscription helps another directly, it will strictly observe what is listed in SRL 232.7 "One circumscription may in special circumstances directly help another, on condition that it inform the General Council".

Apart from exceptional circumstances, no direct aid will be paid into the private account of confreres. Payment will be made to the circumscription account.

6 Openness

Every year the General Bursar will continue to send to the Superiors of circumscriptions an account of financial solidarity in the Congregation.

This account will inform about both solidarity practiced through Cor Unum and the direct aid from circumscription to circumscription. It will remind confreres of the criteria for the distribution of the Cor Unum funds.

In their turn, each year, the Major Superiors will inform the confreres and communities in their circumscriptions about the necessity and the results of financial solidarity in the Congregation.

7 Reserve fund

One of the best ways to arrive at self-sufficiency is the setting up of a Reserve Fund in each circumscription.

The circumscriptions who take part in the setting up of an Apostolic Group, a Foundation or a New Province should take care to provide it with an adequate Reserve Fund.

In the case where the resources of these founding circumscriptions do not suffice to set up this Reserve Fund, they will appeal through Cor Unum to the solidarity of the whole Congregation.

8 The future

The General Council will organise a meeting to study the needs of the new circumscriptions, to make plans for solidarity in their regard, and to study the possibilities of self-financing.

This meeting will include, among others, delegates of the Major Superiors and Bursars of the regions concerned.

36 FORMATION

1 Learning from our experience

At this Chapter, Spiritans shared their experiences of mission. The Spiritan charism was shown to us in many colours that were sometimes startling, sometimes familiar.

Spiritans life, which unfolded in twelve telling presentations, was an approval of Spiritan formation and at the same time a challenge to it. As new frontiers are crossed, new requirements of preparation are revealed.

As we entered into the different experiences, we realised that we were being evangelised. From this experience of ongoing formation that we were going through, we had a glimpse of formation from within.

 Listening came across to us as a touchstone of mission. It is the heart of dialogue, the irreplaceable first step of inculturation, the clearest expression of initial respect for another person. All formation requires a receptive attitude. We must learn to listen. The teacher who listens to his students is giving a lesson in listening.  

Missionary teams are no longer composed exclusively of clerics and religious. Lay men and women are prominent partners. Formation must take into account the total human reality.

The spirituality of mission has some new twists. God's grace precedes us. Contact with his people nourishes us.

2 Some particular aspects

Our insights about formation can be grouped under certain themes.

2.1 An ongoing examination

*clearly
evident
from
writing
relating*

Training in theological reflection helps us make sense of our experience. It should become part of our way of life, incorporating a re-reading of our Spiritan Sources and the deepening of our spiritual and religious lives. It should be accorded an extended period of time after the first years of ministry and during a sabbatical year. An example of ongoing formation of this sort is seen in the Spiritan month in Europe. Something similar could be developed elsewhere.

2.2 Pastoral stage

*have the / be seen
able to have well
grounded based
elaborate*

Formation itself is inculturated when the Spiritan learns to live the Gospel in the heart of his own culture. To venture outside his culture in the Overseas Training Programme (OTP) is equally important (SRL 136,1-4). Concerns about OTP centered on the preparedness and willingness of the receiving communities and field directors.

2.3 Formation of formators

Clearly important in bridging cultural gaps are formators who can promote intercultural respect and understanding. There is recognition of the need of a long term plan for the training of formators, and of the Congregation's need of specialists in the human sciences. The composition of the staff could include laymen and women.

Good

sent of 500 schools

justice system
emphasise
refers to
mission

2.4 New appeals

As regards the curriculum, emphasis was placed on anthropology, sociology, language study (SRL 141.2) and other human sciences which allow a new reading of our reality. In theology, ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue got prominence. Ideally, missiology, rather than just a subject to be studied, would be the prevailing atmosphere throughout theology. In a sense, justice issues would also pervade all of theology just as they are everywhere present in mission. Enriched by fresh insights, we would finally come to discernment - the reliable guide and spur to action.

sent of 500 schools
need to have all over for justice issues

3 Organisation and animation

As well as the significant experiences of the Chapter, we reflected on the Superior General's report and the meetings of formators held in Dublin and Enugu. This led to the following orientations:

3.1 Unity

We acknowledge a diversity in our human and religious backgrounds, a diversity that should be respected in our different paths of formation.

how expressed? how decided with love how chosen? how rejected?

At the same time, our Spiritan history and charism, and the needs of mission today, call us to a unity which is like a precious gift given to us.

the spirit is a gift

For this reason we want to encourage, for example, international communities of formation, especially at the level of the third cycle: also the continuance of the meetings of formators at a regional and international level, where formators can get to know each other better, share their experience and benefit from the contribution of visiting experts.

sent of 500 schools
need to have all over for justice issues

*and leaders
? cont
we serve*

In this perspective of unity, it would be helpful that a general outline of formation be drawn up in the coming years, based on our mission as we see it today. It would be the result of a dialogue between major superiors, formators and the General Council. The General Assistant for formation will be attentive to the application of this outline in the individual formation plans of circumscriptions and regions.

3.2 Solidarity

Each circumscription or region understandably wants to preserve a measure of autonomy. At the same time the young Provinces and Foundations also want to see established a sharing of formation personnel. *is necessary for wideness
with collection.*

*How we
commit
ours.*

The way to greater mutual support is through better information about each other. The General Council will collect from each circumscription a list of the qualified people available and of the personnel needs in the area of Spiritan formation. In this way it will facilitate the dialogue and the understanding between the persons and the circumscriptions concerned, with a view to arriving at a solidarity that brings results (SRL 106, 159.1). *from present. call to action*

3.3 General Assistant for formation

*also
young
faints
and
help
page*

Experience shows that the workload of the Assistant responsible for formation has become quite heavy. It is proposed that this Assistant confines himself principally to visiting the communities, the houses and the people involved in formation. With the agreement of the General Council, he can get for himself the sort of help he considers most appropriate.

37 FOUNDATIONS

1 Hopes and questions

The new Provinces and Foundations are one of the most important signs of life, hope and vitality for the Congregation today. The future of the Congregation is linked to their growth and development and the mission of the Congregation tomorrow will depend largely on their apostolic initiative. It is estimated that, by the year 2004, members from the Foundation and young Provinces will form close to 50% of the active membership of the Congregation (I/D 45).

The presentation of the East African Province made us aware of the gift of our missionary and religious charism but spotlighted, at the same time, the practical difficulties of moving from Foundation to Province status and of establishing new relationships with the existing Provinces and Districts in the region. The Enlarged General Council of Arusha in 1989 devoted much attention to these problems. We also gave our attention to this important question and proposed some guidelines for the future.

2 Criteria for creation of Foundations and Provinces

As missionaries, one of our tasks is to establish the local Church and clergy. In many territories this has led to a flowering of religious and missionary vocations. In these circumstances we will be happy to start a Foundation and thus help the Church to realise its missionary vocation.

We should not take on works for the sole purpose of recruitment.

We will ensure that in starting a Foundation, we have adequate means to organise a formation programme.

We accept the criteria for the transition of a Foundation to the status of a Province as specified in the Superior General's Report (4.2.4).

3 Formation

The first steps of initial formation are best done in the local culture, if possible.

We encourage small circumscriptions to link with well established Spiritan formation centers with a view to better quality formation.

We believe that our students deserve the highest quality of formation and for this reasons we favour the development of regional formation centers.

We feel it appropriate that the General Assistant responsible for formation visit all formation centers and coordinate formation programmes in dialogue with major superiors and formators.

The significant experiences have shown us how important it is for missionaries to be attentive to and to respect other cultures. Learning together in international formation centers gives us an opportunity to put this respect and attention into practice and to treat all cultures on an equal basis.

4 Relations with Districts and Provinces

We encourage ongoing collaboration between Districts and new Foundations and Provinces and a coming together in the spirit of equality and brotherhood (SRL 37). This collaboration also implies solidarity in personnel and finances with regard to formation programmes and difficult apostolic projects.

It is important for Foundations to have a sense of identity and a specific mission project, worked out in dialogue with the circumscriptions concerned. We are happy to see them opening up new areas of mission and we must not expect them to "fill slots" in the older Districts and Provinces.

In a world where ethnic strife and discord are all too prevalent, we feel it important as missionaries to give a Christian witness of unity and interracial harmony. For this reason, we strongly encourage maximum collaboration between Districts and Foundations and even fusion, as in the East African Province, Angola and Brazil.

We think it important that all Foundations have a "home base" (a center or house or parish) where they can meet and live. The founding circumscriptions should collaborate in providing this base.

5 Finance

We expect circumscriptions and Cor Unum to help with immediate needs.

As eventual financial independence is the long term goal, we suggest that Cor Unum should help, as far as possible, in setting up the necessary reserves for this purpose.

The services of a professional may be of help to Foundations and new Provinces in their fund-raising efforts.

38 LAY PEOPLE IN THE CONGREGATION

1 Statements and convictions

1.1 Vocation

The witness of the two lay people present at the Chapter made a deep impression on the assembly. It is not easy to decide to sell when you have a family, a beautiful home to go elsewhere to a house of hospitality and later to the Far North of Canada to be with the indigenous people. It is not easy to leave a good job with good promotion prospects to go to work in a mission *prokur*.

Our presenters were just two from the many who have discovered the Spiritans and Spiritan spirituality in various of our Circumscriptions. These men and women, termed in some circumscriptions "Associates" and in others "Lay Spiritans", have expressed their desire to work with the Spiritan family in the apostolate.

We heard from delegates that lay people are becoming more deeply associated in the life of the Congregation in at least 13 circumscriptions. Reports were presented from Germany, Holland, Spain, France, England, Kilimanjaro, Brazil, Cameroon, U.S.A. East, U.S.A. West, Canada, Transcanada, Mauritius and Papua-New Guinea. We came to understand that the lay vocation is a distinct call and instead of diminishing vocations to the Congregation it enriches our own missionary call.

1.2 Spirituality

Jesus came to establish a Kingdom in which every one would feel at home. Once, while preaching, someone asked him where he lived. His answer was "Come and see". The lay

associates are also asking our Spiritan family a similar question: "Where do you live? We are interested in sharing with you your mission and your founders' spirituality!"

In fact, during the whole history of the Congregation there has always been this listening to the call from lay people, based on the conviction that all baptised are called by the same Spirit.

Francis Libermann's spirituality appears right for the lay associate, with its emphasis on the concrete lived experience and practical union with Christ. "One heart and one soul" expresses the essence, the heart of a lay spiritan. It is a response to a call, towards a way of life. It is belonging. The lay associate regards it as a vocation, Christ centered and guided by the Spirit.

1.3 Apostolic Commitments

Today our apostolate faces many genuine demands and challenges. The Spiritan family has been called to evangelise with others in closer union with lay people. The lay associates actually working with the Spiritans in various circumscriptions are a living sign of the mission and of each local Church. Their listening to the Spirit can bring their enlightenment to our mission.

Some lay associates are sent by their home church as living witnesses of solidarity. Others learn from the spiritual and cultural richness of the local church to which they are sent. They bring back what they learn to their home church and so help improve mutual understanding and sustain the living missionary spirit.

Some others again work in the home missions but then we have learned that "Mission" is everywhere. The marginalised are present in all nations.

2 Guidelines

* We help the lay associate with a formation programme deemed appropriate to the type of association which they wish to have with us. The programme will not be the same for all but will have a Spiritan dimension (SRL 135.1).

* While we welcome them, we assure them that we do not wish to build structures into their association with us at this stage, because we do not judge that the time is ripe for this.

* A General Assistant will accompany the lay associates with a view to promoting their undertaking and further clarifying issues which emerge.

3 Conclusion

We are in a period of transition both in the world and in the Congregation. Something familiar is being left behind; something new is as yet just beyond our reach. We can either look back with regret or forward in expectation.

There is no way of predicting with certainty where this passage will lead us. From the Congregation's reading of the signs of the times there seems to be a clear invitation from the Spirit to continue this lay initiative (Superior General's Report 3:4).

39 REGIONALISATION

1 Ever greater challenges

The significant experiences clearly show us that it is the world which, to a large extent, writes our agenda. It presents us with the major challenges of our times, and puts them before us in their global context.

In our decentralised Congregation, we feel that same dynamic, of the world-wide reality transcending the particular. As an answer to these problems, circumscriptions come together and cooperate, in the form of regions, thus correcting the weaknesses that may be inherent in decentralisation.

2 Forms of Regionalisation

The usual way in which regions have developed, as the experiences showed us, is through reflection and planning on issues that they have in common: Justice and Peace, Brothers, Lay Associates, Formation, priorities and financial policies. This gradually leads to different forms of collaboration. The Chapter wants to encourage this.

Regions grow from below, following their own rhythm and shape, as the needs arise. They themselves discern how to share responsibilities and they plan accordingly. We want to respect this dynamism.

It struck us how many of our apostolic undertakings are vulnerable and fragile, due to age, small numbers and sometimes the insecurity of the teams involved in them. We encourage the cooperation of Spiritan circumscriptions in terms of personnel and finance, and recommend proper coordination between them whenever they want to recall confreres from such projects.

The struggle of our confreres in Haiti on the side of the oppressed, was greatly supported by well organised services and assistance offered by the entire North American region. But still more important may have been the moral support it provided. We recommend such region-wide support wherever confreres are involved in situations of war, major disaster, defense of human rights and refugee work.

3 New Provinces: regrouping and fusion

The evolution of the Foundations and the birth of new Provinces resulted from the collaboration of entire circumscriptions at all levels; reflection, planning, sharing of resources and the creation of new structures for formation at regional level. We encourage this movement for the existing foundations.

Where Provinces, Foundations and Districts still exist together in the same region, we recommend that all appearance of division between groups from different social and cultural background be remedied through close cooperation, and, progressively, through fusion between circumscriptions, where that is possible.

Circumscriptions which are too small to survive on their own may have to consider re-grouping or fusion. The General Council will deal with such situations in dialogue with the circumscriptions concerned.

4 Animation of the region

Regions need animators more than new structures of authority, in order to stimulate solidarity, encourage creativity and foster cooperation and coordination. Communications and sharing of information are key realities in this situation. We ask the General Council to assist in this animation, and we mandate it to promote regionalisation.

5 Difficulties

Regionalisation may be more difficult where circumscriptions are isolated - geographically or culturally. They look to the General Council to help them, as they rely more directly on the solidarity of the wider Spiritan family.

Obstacles can also arise from the mentality of confreres or circumscriptions, which can include inaccurate ideas about autonomy, authority or self-sufficiency. At this level we all need constant conversion.

Some have pointed out that there are also risks involved; one can lose, to some extent, the comforting sense of belonging to a circumscription and the loyalty that goes with it. A circumscription may lose something of its sense of identity. While being aware of these risks, we must also remember that our evaluation of the worth of a cause may be judged by the risks we are prepared to take for it.

6 Crossing boundaries

The regions, in their turn, must cross their own boundaries and join together in solidarity at the level of the Congregation worldwide, under the responsibility of the General Council. International meetings, promoted by the General Council, are to be further encouraged.

40 CHANGES TO THE SPIRITAN RULE OF LIFE

The General Chapter examined the requests to change or clarify our Spiritan Rule of Life. The majority of these requests concerned Chapter 7 "The Organisation of the Congregation."

- * An overall guideline was accepted: the General Council was asked to prepare a complete revision of this Chapter 7.

- * Within this Chapter, four modifications were voted upon; they will be sent soon for approbation to the competent Vatican Congregation.

41 SPIRITAN SOURCES AND HISTORY

The General Council was given the responsibility of seeing to the publication of several works concerning our Spiritan history and sources. In particular:

- * a collation of significant works of our founders, with an historical and theological presentation;
- * a critical biography of Francis Libermann;
- * a lectionary proper to the Congregation.

An international commission is to be established to get this project in motion.

42 DECLARATION OF SUPPORT

The Chapter voted a declaration of support of the ecumenical approach of the Spiritan Group of Gamu-Gofa in Ethiopia.

"On the last day and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood there and cried out:

"If any man is thirsty, let him come to me!
Let the man come and drink who believes in me!"

As Scripture says: From his breast shall flow fountains of living water.

He was speaking of the Spirit which those who believed in him were to receive ..."

John 7:37-39

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